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# JÖRGENSEN

*An Autobiography*

VOL. I.

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(*Ep.* 231, *ad. Darium*).

# JÖRGENSEN

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*Translated from the Danish by*
INGEBORG LUND

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*First published, 1928*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
THE STANHOPE PRESS, LTD.
ROCHESTER .. KENT

# PREFACE

In the Cathedral of Siena, before the chapel of Our Lady, there are seven *sgrafitti* in the marble floor, representing the seven ages of man. Maëstro Antonio Federighi designed and engraved them in 1475 and they were restored in the nineteenth century by Maëstro Alessandro Franchi. The white figures on a black ground show the seven stages in a human life, leading from the cradle to the grave. The first, *infantia*, is childhood, gaily chasing a butterfly ; then comes *puerilia*, boyhood, on the way to school, with a book tucked under one arm ; next *adolescentia*, a youth with a falcon on his wrist, going a-hunting and a-loving, the flowers springing up where he treads ; after him come *juventus*, the young man, and *virilitas*, mature manhood, followed by *senectus*, old age, in a fur coat and with a rosary in his hand—he is beginning to think of the life to come ; finally, in the middle, surrounded by the other six, as though by medallions, the great centre picture : *decrepitas*, extreme old age, leaning on his staff, walking feebly and with bent back towards his goal, a Roman sarcophagus. And then ? *Cineres et nihil*, in the words engraved on the Cardinal's tombstone in the Capuchin church in Rome—" Ashes and nothing."

The seven pictures give food for thought, and I have often meditated upon them. Four of the ages have fully run their course in my life, the sands of the fifth are sinking fast ; *senectus* is drawing near, *molesta senectus*, as it is called in the German students' song, " those days of which one says, I do not like to think of them." And who knows whether I shall ever see those days ? So many of the friends with whom I set out on the road

of life are no longer with me, they were stopped at one of the earlier stations of life's *Via Crucis*.

Of these I will speak before they are quite forgotten— while there are still some left who remember them and care to hear about them. And I will speak about myself before I have quite forgotten what I was like then, a generation ago, which is so long a time that I can speak about myself as of a stranger.

I might have written a sort of novel instead of an autobiography, but I do not see the use of writing in the third person instead of in the first . . . . After all, everyone knows that " he " is only a mask concealing " I."

Besides, even if I say " I," this " I " is not always I. The formula for a book like this must always be that given by Goethe : Truth and fiction. Indeed, how can one tell the truth at all without inventing ? One does not want to empty a basketful of facts upon one's reader— one wishes to give him an impression of a life, of a development, of something that acts on a definite plan and is driven by definite forces.

That is the aim which I have mainly had in view, of showing why the man whom I have here described, and of whom I speak as " I," became what he did become, went in the direction he did go, committed the faults he did commit. I have myself learned a great deal from this study of the Self. I have in particular found the confirmation of one of my favourite ideas, namely this, that *in life one reaches exactly that which in one's inmost soul one desired to reach.*

It has not only been said, " What a man sows, that shall he also reap," but also, " Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill."

In other words, that which a man in his inmost heart desires to attain he will attain ; what his whole nature strives to reach that will he reach. Life consists of an

unbroken series of dilemmas, great and small—and man chooses according to his inmost nature. Now, this continual series of small choices, always in the same direction, determines the direction of his life. There are men who wish to be happy—fewer, perhaps, than one believes. There are natures which need unhappiness —more than one believes. It is not only Arthur Gordon Pym (in Edgar Allan Poe's book) who can say of himself: "My visions were of shipwreck and famine; of death or captivity among barbarian hordes; of a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears upon some grey and desolate rock, in an ocean unapproachable and unknown." There are many whose ideal state is that of unhappiness. Ernest Hello has written a remarkable chapter on what he calls "the passion for unhappiness." This passion lies at the root of many human lives. To them the thought of being happy seems insipid and sickly, like food that is too sugary. They aspire to bitter, proud, stiff-necked unhappiness. And it is this interior aspiration which continually makes man choose —this is the driving force, the motive power which acts upon life, the personal formula regulating the life of each individual existence.

I wrote once that "Ideals exist that they may be realised." I would rather say now that "Ideals realise themselves." I am not speaking here, of course, of the exterior, the merely formal ideal. I am speaking of the ideal which is a vital force—the ideal of your blood, the ideal of your flesh, the ideals of your longings and of your will. Be not afraid—or rather, be afraid: whither those ideals will lead you, thither you will go. As they are so will you be. One who knew this from bitter experience—Oscar Wilde—has said: "You can have no thought in your inmost heart that you will not some day have to shout from the house-tops."

JOHANNES JÖRGENSEN.

Assisi, January, 1916.

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## *TUNING THE STRINGS*

I AM tuning the strings of my life's instrument. I sit here in solitude and let my thoughts run over the days of my life, like a mandoline player letting his fingers run over the strings of his instrument, sitting a long, long while and plucking idly at the strings, lingeringly, mournfully, dreamily . . . .

I sit here alone and have put in order all the years of my life—they span half a century—they are like the drawers of an old chest, and in the long winter evenings I sit before the chest like an organist before his organ, pulling out the drawers and pushing them in like stops, and making a note sound here and there, now the *vox humana*, now the *cælestis*. . . .

I sit like an old bell-ringer in one of the belfries of Flanders, Saint Rombaud at Malines or Saint Sauveur in Bruges, making memories ring a carillon, and listening to the music, now sad, now triumphant, of my life.

Now I tune the strings, my life's strings. I will tell its story—as the wayfarer tells a story by the fireside of a Tuscan peasant—and as I go on I will throw the pages into the fire to warm myself at their flame and see a little longer by the light of their glow.

* * *

It is in Siena on a spring morning that I begin this book. I awake with the feeling of having slept long. The light coming through the cracks in the shutters is stronger than usual, and I feel more rested, younger,

and conscious of fewer of the ailments here and there of which a man who has reached the age of fifty is generally aware on waking up, the signs of approaching decay—the portents that autumn is drawing near.

I awake as I did when I was still in the springtime of my life, the cool, restless, windy and dusty spring, which had also days that seemed to have come forth from the gates of the lost Paradise. I awake as I did when I was twenty years old, and involuntarily, without knowing or intending it, I begin the day as I began it then. Of a sudden it seems as if there were nothing to do but get up, dress, drink coffee and take up existence just as it is without going to Mass, without the usual kneeling at the morning sacrifice, without that quiet hour in the cool, dimly-lit church, where all heads are bent like flowers before the sun and all hearts lifted up to the White Host and the golden Chalice, when they are raised up over the altar and the silence grows so deep that one hears the heart-beats of God . . . .

There are many churches in Siena, and it is not yet too late to find one where Mass may be heard. Hark! the deep notes of the bells of the *Duomo* call to the High Mass of the Canons, and down in the valley, amongst the pink and yellow-ochre houses with their green shutters, small, hurried silver bells are pealing rapidly—they belong to the Casa di Santa Caterina or to Sant' Antonio in Fontebranda. A couple of strokes also sound from San Stefano sulla Lizza—or do they come from so far out as San Pietro In Magione or perhaps from Sant' Andrea in the Via Cavour, opposite the Grand Hotel? It is quite certain that some old priest will say Mass at eleven o'clock in Santa Maria di Provenzano, the large, light Baroque church, in which so many candles are always burning before the Madonna above the high altar, and where it is so good to kneel amongst the beggars and old ladies, in the broad, brown, polished walnut-wood benches.

But I cannot begin this day kneeling. This morning is a morning of my youth, when the supernatural had not yet begun to exist. The only thing to be done is to walk out in the sunshine of this morning of spring. Which I proceed to do. From the Pension Chiusarelli I turn, not to the right, towards the churches, but to the left, in the direction of the Lizza, the public park, and the Fortezza, once a fortress, built by Cosimo de' Medici, and a public promenade since 1780.

It is still early morning. There are only few nursemaids in the Lizza, and the wide paths of the Fortezza lie deserted in the morning sun. The newly opened leaves of the horse-chestnuts hang like dainty green gloves with five limply drooping fingers. It is windy and dusty ; it is cool. My hands are cold.

I reach the outermost bastion. I stop and lean against the semi-circular, walled parapet—it is like standing in the stern of a ship. The first lizards are gliding over the sun-warmed stones and disappearing down the outer side of the wall into the crevices where they live.

From this spot there is a wide view inwards over Siena and outwards across the country, which is blue like the sea. Siena rises in row upon row of houses towards the dome, blue like the air, of the cathedral and its black-and-white striped *campanile*. The country spreads out, from the newly-ploughed golden-brown fields near by, beneath the olive trees and the blossoming fruit trees, in wave upon wave of mist-shrouded hills, far out towards the furthermost blue : Poggio Montieri fifty kilometres away in the Maremma, and towards the south Santa Fiora and Mont' Amiata.

How well do I know this wide country ! How I have wandered along its roads ! Yonder height with the cypresses is Monsindoli. That tower far away, almost disappearing in the distance, is San Rocco a Pilli. Over there is Sant' Eugenio, with its round tower, its red and pointed pinnacles. Yonder is Belcaro, square like an

Ark that has run a-ground in a pinewood. Behind Belcaro, above the great plain of Pian del Lago, which was once a lake, are the long, gently-sloping heights of La Montagnuola, in the spring flush of budding woods, bathed in a sunny bluish haze and dappled with tiny white hamlets glittering in the sun; I recognise Santa Columba with the shining belfry—I can distinguish Chiocciola—I see other small places of which I do not know the names—and far up in the wood there is a lonely little *paëse*, probably only a peasant farm. I see it every morning from my window, a little to the right of Belcaro. There it stands, shining in the bright morning sun, now and then smoke rises from it, or a window-pane reflects the sunlight and gleams for a few moments as brightly as the light in an arc-lamp. I have tried to find the name of the place on a map; but in vain. In the evening, in the bluish dusk, when the whole of the vast landscape becomes like a limitless bowl filled with violets, a light is sometimes lit far away, in the direction of the unknown *paëse*—a little, lonely, golden light far away amongst the violet hills. Then I imagine myself in the place where the light is lit. I see the house, a Tuscan homestead, grimly shut from the road by a high, grey wall, silent and closed like the motionless face of an old peasant. High up in the wall there are only a couple of suspicious-looking grated round openings. But on the inside the house is open, the high, outstanding steps lead up to the arcade along the upper storey, the arcade under which the maize cobs are hung up to dry in the autumn, the shelled spathes lying in great heaps in the corners. At night the wind rustles in them and makes one think of the footsteps of ghosts.

From the arcade I go into the large kitchen—the dark, roomy, untidy and homely Tuscan kitchen, where the hams are hanging from the rafters and the fire is glowing on the hearth, where an oil lamp with double

burners sheds a drowsy light on the bare pitch-pine table, polished bright by many elbows. This cannot be the lamp that I see from so far away—the light is much too feeble. It must be the fire on the hearth, on which the soup is being cooked for the evening meal. . . . In the flickering red glimmer the women of the house go to and fro, straight-backed, tight-waisted, broad-hipped. They are setting the table—I see the coarse tablecloth, which is covered with old, purple wine stains ; the large, round, loaf, dusty with flour outside and grey inside when you cut a slice from it ; I see the knives, which are of iron, with handles of worn, whitish metal.

Round about the room the men of the house sit waiting, tired and silent, their backs bent and their hands upon their knees. Now they come forward and sit down to the table—I see the handsome faces, the chiselled features, the warm-hued skin, the white teeth—I see the *Minestra* being served out with a deep tin ladle—I see that in the plates it has the slightly muddy, pinkish look of having been coloured with tomato-sauce ; it is thickened with rice. I see the *fiasco*, its straw is brown and old—I see the ruby-red wine in the cheap, thick tumblers which are not very clean.

Suddenly I can see no more, because the light is put out, and perhaps it was only a charcoal-burner's fire in the wood. But every fresh sunny morning my little nameless *paëse* stands there shining on the mountain. This morning it stands shining there again—and round about it the woods are clothed in the rose-brown tints of spring. Up, through the spring woods runs a white road, a gleaming white and lonely road, disappearing over the ridge of the mountain. . . .

Here I stand, then, on the rampart of Siena and look at the disappearing white road, as filled with longing as when in my home in Svendborg I saw from the window in the gable the white road to Nyborg disap-

pearing into the country towards the lonely tree on the hill . . . .

The white road is the same, the clear, sunny, cold, windy and dusty spring about me is the same—I am the same. Everything has happened and it is as though nothing had happened. [1]Ahasuerus became a pilgrim, but never ceased to be a stranger. The longing for what is far away is present then as now, spring with its longings is present as it was then, and I am myself what I was then . . . . .

[1]Allusion to a poem by Johannes Jörgensen entitled "Ahasuerus."—Tr.

# *LEGENDS OF SPRING*

*Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria.*—DANTE.

I

"You always live on your memories," said an old friend to me lately, one of the few left of those who have known me long. "Vous vivez toujours dans vos souvenirs!"

He is right. As far back as I can remember I have lived in memories. The future has never existed for me, but I have loved to dwell upon the past. I began my youth in longing for something that had passed away and in looking back for a lost Paradise. This longing, this gazing back, made me a poet; in this way:

When I was a boy there was as yet no grammar school in my native town. I was to go to the University, and therefore, when, having completed my time at the secondary school I was sent to Copenhagen, when barely sixteen. I had obtained a scholarship at a grammar school situated in the northern part of the city and cheap lodgings in the house of a shoemaker living at Christianshavn in the south. Every morning and every afternoon I had to trudge through the whole length of Copenhagen and I had to walk over three bridges to reach my school.

For two years I lived in this way—from 1882 till 1884. Copenhagen was not then the modern capital in which the Danish youth of eighteen now spends his college days; it was a large, dingy, dirty town, with no electric

light, no asphalt, and with horse trams. *Politiken*[1] was then in its infancy, and no one had as yet thought of inventing the motor car.

In the foggy winter and the muddy streets of this Copenhagen then, Svendorg, which I had left behind, became the land of summer and sunshine, the land of happiness. When the first spring came, the spring of 1883, I went for lonely walks along the Kalvebod beach and longed for the view at home over the Sound at Svendborg, with the long, low ridges of the woods at Taasinge and the church at Bregninge. I understood well, when later I read Jean Paul's lines about that irresistible "Kuhreigen" which calls us back to the sunlit Alps of childhood. My vanished childhood in that little town had just that look for me—of a lost and far-off country, it filled me with yearning when I thought of it lying there shining, on the horizon, as light and delicate and beautiful as summer clouds, and I was never to set foot in it again.

In this way I learnt longing. When I was at home again in the summer holidays—far too short, alas!—all my troubles were forgotten, everything was again light, joy, peace. I was *at home*—and home was the wide country about Svendborg, it was above all the woods, from "Thoughtful" and "The Meadows" and the Skovsbo hills in the south, to "Big Garden," "The Haunted Wood" and "The Outrider Hills" in the north, the "Grass Eyots" and "Margaret's Grove" in the west. My sisters and I liked best of all to go to the Grass Eyots; not a soul ever went there—we had the whole of the large woods to ourselves; in the long summer afternoons we wandered over the flat lands, in the meadows, through the copses and the bogs in them, and we came back late to the house in Our Lady's Lane, laden with big bunches of fragrant meadowsweet and honeysuckle, bachelor's buttons, limewort and butterfly

[1]Now the leading Radical paper.—Tr.

orchis, which we arranged in bunches on the old, big table in the washhouse, and we would not wash our hands afterwards because they smelt so deliciously of flowers and all the green stuff.

Home meant the woods, and home meant the garden the old and old-fashioned garden along the backs of the houses of Prisholm, the baker, and Mikkelsen, the coachbuilder. (My father had planted a vine against Prisholm's wall, and it grew large because it had the south sun besides the heat from the oven in the bakery.) The old garden with the two large fruit trees, an apple and a pear tree, which only bore fruit every other year but this fruit was so large and heavy with juice, that once when an apple fell down on my mother's head it broke her back comb. The old garden with the summer-house down by the purling brook—"the jump-across brook," it was called, nor was it wider than a jump across it being practicable—and the other summer-house under the elder tree, which always dropped a fine snow from its delicate, creamy white flowers on to the green table underneath it.

To sit in that garden, in that summer-house, on an afternoon during the time of the roses, when moss roses and *roses de Provence*, *Gloire de Dijon* and *Maréchal Niel* were all in bloom, and the coffee-table was set under the elder tree—to sit there and drink out of the familiar cups of delicate china with the little old-fashioned gilt flowers—to recognise that peculiar taste which only the coffee at home ever had, to see around me the faces I had known so far back as I could remember—Ah! all that joy of the holidays, pure and deep and calm like the blue sky above the old trees and the red roofs round about—that, and the longing for it, became the fundamental note in my life, perhaps the deepest—it grew into that longing for home which brought me back from even the furthest wanderings into the wilderness. Never, I think, have I been really happy outside that

old garden in a country town, and only where I find it again do I feel at home.

Yet in that very garden I met the force which was opposed to that of home—the force that draws one away, the everlasting enemy of that which *is*, because it wills something that *is to be*: the force of love. In Eden I had for the first time met Eve and all that is hers: banishment, the flaming sword at the gate, the earth that is to yield you thorns and thistles.

As yet it was only a springtime Eve and a springtime Eros resembling most of all the snowdrop as interpreted by the Swedish sculptor, modestly, chastely, and unconscious of her own nakedness, reaching up towards the light. The feeling for "her" and the feeling for home could walk side by side in Copenhagen, merge into one longing and one home-sickness. My first verses were written about "her," and about Svendborg I wrote that little book, now long since vanished, which I called *Legends of Spring*. I began this first halting and uncertain effort in prose with lines like these:

"It was early in the spring. The fields, faintly green, were still moist after the thaw, and the last dingy, grey snow was still lying in drifts behind a hedge. But the elder tree was breaking, the beech was budding and the snowdrops were standing in round clusters in the black gardens where the blackish-brown autumn leaves were mouldering away. Out in the woods the ground was growing white with anemones far away amongst the moist, black tree trunks, and on the hilly slopes to the south stood the pale yellow cowslips with their orange-coloured chalices, and shoals of white and violet larkspur sent out their fragrance. The black velvet of the marshy ground was sprinkled with the gold of ranunculi and of large, juicy marsh marigolds, past which glimmering brooks ran murmuringly, and up above the filigree of the red, resin-varnished twigs the sky was deep and bright, and poured down a tinkling rain of

larks' trills, through air that was softened by the first warmth of the sun."

In dark contrast to this picture, written out of the longings inspired by a morning in spring, follows that of the young man's duties (the learning of lessons !)

"It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. The room looked on the garden and the yard, and through the window, which was open behind the lowered blind, he heard the birds twittering in the big apple tree, the hens cackling and clucking in the yard and the neighbour's children shouting and laughing gaily at their games. He knew that the other boys were now whipping tops in the sun-dried streets or playing chuck farthing against the large granite stones in the gable walls of the church. From the neighbour's yard he heard the voice of a young girl above the voices of the children—Anna's voice—bright, like a clear flame above all the others. But only a meagre strip of sunshine reached him each time the blind swelled out under the draught coming in through the window—a narrow beam of glimmering, luminous dust, which sparkled for a moment in the facets of the inkstand and caught the gilt on the bindings of a couple of books on the bookshelves—to fade again when the blind was sucked back and flapped against the window frame."

This was realism, the orthodox realism of the 'eighties. There is a meticulous account of the phenomena of light that may be produced by a ray of sunlight in a semi-darkened room. But beneath the imitated and acquired style the heart of the youth of twenty-one beats ardently and personally (I speak as though I spoke of another). This page of an old, forgotten story expresses neither more nor less than the leading motive of my life—that I, when faced with the choice between duty and dream, between the life of everyday and that of longing, always chose the dream and the longing. That was to be my destiny—for, as Heine has said, " The soul of a man is

his destiny." And duty and the life of everyday took their revenge on me.

Three times a day the bells of the Church of Our Lady could be heard from the home of my childhood, and on Sundays people passed beneath our windows on their way to and from church. How often did I not help our old servant, Maren, to spread flowers and branches on the road for a wedding, or sand and box-wood twigs for a funeral!

Religious life in the modern sense of the word was unknown in Svendborg in those days. At the Church of Our Lady we had Pastor Prip, who lived at the end of the lane in his handsome parsonage with the yellow painted walls and the rose garden; at St. Nicholas we had Pastor Warburg, whose preaching was said to be so heartfelt, and at whom street urchins shouted because he was so tall and thin, and always wore his trousers turned up round his ankles. But we had no "home mission" and no high school hostel; and only the Bangs were said to be Grundtvigians,[1] because they stood up in their pew when the creed was said. Otherwise Svendborg had its good old sailor religion, which

[1] An allusion to the two currents which may be observed at the present day in the Danish Lutheran Church. The Home Mission, dating from the middle of the nineteenth century, lays particular stress on the dread of sin and damnation, and represents the harsh and gloomy side of Lutheranism. Grundtvigianism, on the other hand, is luminous and joyous in its attitude and also much nearer to Catholicism. Its founder, N. F. S. Grundtvig, b. 1783, d. 1872, was a religious personality with the gifts of a genius. He believed that faith ought to be founded on the symbols, as he was of the opinion that they were earlier than the gospels. He attached to the sacraments a greater importance than they had in the Lutheran Church, and urged the restoration of the liturgy. As a poet and contemporary of the romantic school, he drew upon the treasure of Scandinavian legends and re-awakened patriotism as he had re-awakened the religious sense. He extended his activities both to education and politics and he had an immense influence in Sweden and Norway, as well as in Denmark. He showed an active interest in education and the People's High Schools, for which he gave the model, are due to his efforts. In these schools adults of both sexes can complete their education and they are a characteristic feature amongst Scandinavian institutions.

consisted in living a decent and honest life, believing in God, going to church on the great feast days and to communion once a year with "the Missus." When my father and mother came home from this annual communion they would stand still just inside the front door and my mother would put her arms round my father's neck and kiss him in the middle of his beard. "For our blessing and happiness, Daddy dear." And my father would glance at the door—suppose anyone had seen it! .... For they were shy, those weather-beaten old salts! They had feelings, but they did not give way to them. They had a religion, but they considered it improper to talk about it.

That was the religion of the home. Then came that of the school. I received my strongest impression of it when I was in the infants' class, which was conducted with maternal authority by a mistress. As Christmas drew near she taught us to say by heart some hymns of the season, and those of us who had voices learnt to sing them. Here I received my first impression of religious poetry, and it was so strong that the first time I had to repeat the lines "Yule has brought good tidings of joy," I was so overwhelmed by emotion that I could not say the words, "Dance, little child, on mother's knee, a beautiful day has dawned." Those Christmas hymns accompanied us all through our schooldays, and now, forty years after, I can still hear our master leading the singing in "The bells are ringing for the feast of Noël," and above all the words: "Now sing ye all, who have voice to sing, To the land of shadows a light has come, And just when the cock at midnight crowed, the star of Jacob became a sun. The hope of the patriarchs has come with words of flame and the baptism of heaven. The child in the fields explains to-day what David saw but darkly and sang of as behind a veil."

Ah! Christmas in Denmark! Christmas in Svendborg! Ah! Christmas in the home of my childhood!

The gentle sun of an Italian winter is shining on the paper on which I write these lines, and the Catholic Christmas bells are pealing more jubilantly and Paradisaically than Flint, the bell-ringer, was ever able to make them peal in Svendborg. And here I sit in a city grown old in culture and art, between Florence and Rome, surrounded by blue mountains. And yet, and yet—if only once more on a Christmas night I could find my way across the loft in the old home by the light of a piece of Christmas candle melted on to a matchbox, and go to bed in the attic in the gable, where the windows are covered with ice-flowers, so that one has to breathe on the pane to get a small, clear peephole, through which there is a view of Svendborg clad in snow, and of a country that is snow-white for miles around, with black woods, beneath a winter moon.

One who had not always been a Christian, but who had passed straight from modern, freethinking Judaism to Catholicism, once said to me: "I really understand Christmas so little! I understand Good Friday and Easter—the suffering and the victory—for I have myself suffered and conquered. I know the *via Crucis* and I know Calvary. But I have never been in Bethlehem."

One who has been born and has grown up in Lutheran Christianity might say almost the opposite. One thing is certain, we all visited Bethlehem in our childhood. I do not remember that we were ever spoken to about the suffering Jesus and about the Cross—only that on Good Friday Pastor Prip cried as he stood in the pulpit reading the story of the Passion, but we children only looked at him in surprise. But the gospel of Christmas—what Dane will ever forget it? One believes more or less in "the beautiful legend"—mostly less—after all, one has read various writings against the "virgin birth"! Nevertheless, there are probably few who do not feel the tears gathering under their eyelids, ready to flow like a fertile rain, when they hear on Christmas Eve the un-

forgettable words : " And there were in the same country shepherds keeping the night watches over their flocks . . . . And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them : Fear not ; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people : For this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you : You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying : Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

Thus it was, because of Christmas, that the home of his childhood, for him who had to live far away from it, became not only the land of happiness, but also the land of peace and joy and of quiet and tranquil content.

" The student came home " (as I have said in one of my books, and I cannot tell it in better words) " in the midst of the cheery bustle of the wholly happy preparations that precede Christmas. He was hardly inside the door and had tasted a piece of the Christmas cake before, as a matter of course, he was set to work. The little brothers and sisters led " big brother " in triumph to the dining-room, where the work of cutting paper hearts and plaiting paper baskets was in full swing.

Utterly contented, he sat down amongst the little ones, with a pair of scissors in his hand, a pastepot and all the sheets of red, yellow, blue and green glazed paper in front of him. He could still remember the days of his childhood and the awe with which he had looked at the beautiful gilt paper, of which there was never more than one sheet, and which Mother therefore cut out herself. He was now grown up himself, and the little ones pushed the gilt paper over to him so that he could cut out the Christmas star. He was filled with a strange

and deep emotion—with so strong a sense of what home can be, of the peace it can hold, of the warmth of hearts that can fill it, that for a moment he hardly knew what he was doing. It was as though he desired nothing better in the world than to sit here with his little brothers and sisters and cut out ornaments for the Christmas tree in the early dusk of a grey December day.

"The day before Christmas Eve has passed away, the evening of Christmas Eve has come. The deep and full-toned bells of the Church of Our Lady ring out over the snow-covered roofs, and up the steep streets come people, dark against the white snow, greeting each other, 'Merry Christmas!' 'A happy feast!'

"The great doors of the old Gothic church stand wide open; inside there is a radiant light from all the candles, the organist plays the opening bars of a hymn, then the singing surges up like the breaking of waves, in one of the old hymns of which the rhythm seems like the beat of angels' wings. The singing over, the old minister goes up into the pulpit, and in his feeble and quavering voice, which is more feeble and quavering than usual to-night, he begins to speak of the great joy that on this night has come to all people—that 'unto you is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord in the city of David.'

"After the service everybody goes home to the festive supper, but it was only a little that the children could eat of all the good things, the rice porridge, the roast goose, the apple dumplings. Their little hearts were beating only for the Christmas tree.

"At last they were sitting in the dark room while the Christmas tree was being lit in the room behind the folding-doors. Was not that someone turning the key? —No, they still had to wait . . . But now, surely, they were opening the door? No, not yet. Suddenly the folding-doors are opened—no one quite knows how—and all the children troop in. With heads erect they gaze at the splendour that meets their view and all the

Christmas candles are brightly mirrored in their shining eyes.

"And now comes that blissful, joyous feeling that only the Christmas tree can spread about it. The feeling that rises quite spontaneously at the moment when all the red and blue and white candles of the Christmas tree light up the room, and one sees one's own shadow multiplied on the wall—twenty shadows crossing and breaking into each other. It is as though the room in which the Christmas tree stands is no longer the room one knows so well, and if for a moment one looks out of the window, down at the quiet, snow-bright street, it seems quite strange that the street is still the same. For the room in which the tree stands has become like a golden Ark, which floats away with its cargo of happiness through the dark night and is rocked on the waves of the river of Time, on hours that are like no others . . ."

* * *

These were the feelings of the student when he was at home for the Christmas holidays, and these were the feelings of the half-grown boy in the home of his childhood in Svendborg.

But one day towards the end of January, when all the Christmas books had long since been read and nothing that had come from the Christmas tree afforded him entertainment any longer—one greyish afternoon in January when the dusk was falling—the same half-grown boy was standing at the window facing the yard and looking out. The weather was midway between frost and thaw; the snow lay half melted and was soiled by coal dust, with hard frozen edges; between the wood pile and the hen-house the Christmas tree was lying withered—on one bare twig there was still a scrap of tinsel, and to another a single candle-holder, from which hung some red, melted wax, was still clinging.

It was cold in the room in which the boy was standing;

before him on the window-sill lay the books that he ought to be reading. But his thoughts would keep straying from geometry, and his glance would keep wandering away from chords and seccants out into the dusk, out to the drearily bare Christmas tree and down to the garden, lying black and soaked behind the mouldy green palings, where the leafless trees stood in thin and mournful outlines against the cold-looking clouds. And then a feeling of helpless and hopeless misery surged over the boy—the misery of simply existing. For he realised that he *was*, and that there was no other state of being than this. This world, in which he and all other human beings were living, this existence, which included everything and everybody, himself, his parents, his brothers and sisters, all his relations, the minister, the schoolmaster, the magistrate, the doctor, the prefect of the district, the king—and all the people in *all* kingdoms and countries—it was the only existence there was—God was in deadly earnest about it—there was no other world, just as there was no other God ; if one did not get happy in this world one would never be happy—for God was the only God—there was no one above Him—if He were unjust there was no one to whom one could complain, because above Him, outside Him, there was no one and nothing—only an empty, bottomless void. In the horror of this thought the boy still stood gazing out in the grey dusk and could find no relief for his crushing, unutterable woe.

## II

Was this all the spiritual luggage that the boy, when barely sixteen years old, took with him when he left his home in the provincial town and went to Copenhagen, to live there alone and on his own responsibility ? No, there was more—not a little more, but that he owed to

his own efforts—neither church nor school nor home had given it to him.

First, then, I will mention something which was not of any importance at the time, but which I could not recall later without a feeling that even then a much greater development was being prepared. Living with us as a member of the household was my mother's brother, Jörgen Johansen, a master at the secondary school in Svendborg, and in his collection of books, which I ransacked eagerly and at haphazard, I found Longfellow's *Golden Legend* and Goethe's *Faust*. I read them both at the age of fourteen or fifteen and retained of them only that which was Catholic—of *Faust* the *Dies irae* in the terrible cathedral scene; of Longfellow's poem a whole series of fragments of Church Latin and especially the pilgrims' hymn about the heavenly Jerusalem, which I have never since forgotten and can still recite from memory:

*Urbs cælestis, urbs beata,*
*Supra petram collocata*
*Urbs in portu satis tuto*
*De longinquo te saluto*
*Te saluto, te suspiro*
*Te affecto, te requiro.*

Unwittingly I was already, even though *de longinquo*, on my way to the Church on the Rock. A further sign of this I perceive in my having found somewhere the words of the Catholic *Ave Maria* and copying it out. My mother had taught me the Lord's prayer, which I said in the good old Lutheran manner, that is, lying on my back in bed. The Latin *Ave*, however, I said before getting into bed, looking out of the window, or—on one occasion—kneeling on the pavement in Our Lady's Lane, late one evening when we had all been out for a long walk and the moon hung bright as silver above the church, bathing the whole street in its white light. My eldest

sister was shocked and said I was a heathen and worshipped the moon.

And what else? I have before me a little book, a small volume put together by myself, fastened with a pin and provided with a parchment cover—taken from the parchment that my mother used for covering jam-pots. The book was "issued" in 1881 and bears the remarkable title *Theosophia esoterica et eklektica*. The author's name is given as Ioannes Theophilos, and—owing to a dread that the book might fall into the hands of my mirth-loving school-fellows—I had written on the cover, "O inimici, noli me tangere!" Below this, on the middle of the cover, there is a drawing of a circle, enclosed in a pentagon, in the centre of the circle a cross, on the transverse beam of the cross the Hebraic name of Jehovah; at the foot of the vertical beam the Hebrew word for "spirit," Ρουαχ, all of it extremely cabbalistic!

Strange as it may sound, I was seriously studying both Kabbala and theosophy. Not in the original texts, of course, but in popular books on the subject, such as *Mediæval Magic*, by Viktor Rydberg,[1] as well as Gold-

[1]Rydberg (Abraham Viktor), b. 1828—d. 1895, a Swedish writer who greatly influenced the intellectual life of his time. He was unhappy during his early years, educated himself and became one of the most cultivated men of his day. Becoming a journalist, he was for a time on the staff of a commercial, liberal paper. Later he became professor of philosophy and the history of civilisation at the University of Gothenburg, afterwards being transferred to that of Stockholm. He was a member of the Swedish Parliament from 1870-72. During the Franco-Prussian war he was on Germany's side, while the Swedish people, as a whole, sympathised with France.

He was at one and the same time philosopher, poet, historian and novelist. In his novels, *The Corsair of the Baltic* and *Singoalla* he is of the romantic school. In *The Last of the Athenians* his sympathies are with dying paganism, or rather, perhaps, with freethought, against Christianity. In *The Armourer* he chose the period of the Reformation for his subject, as it developed in Sweden, taking the side of Catholicism against the reformers. He further showed his enmity against the Lutheran Church in his work, *What the Bible teaches us about Christ* (1862), in which he attacked the orthodoxy of the reformers. Amongst other works by Rydberg may be mentioned *Magic in the Middle Ages*, and *Studies in Teutonic Mythology*. In honour of the quatrocentenary of the University of Upsala he wrote a cantata, in which he describes the onward march of

schmidt's book on Nemesis,[1] Martensen's[2] on Jacob Böhme, *Dogmatics*, by the same theologian, and, finally, Frederick Hammerich's[3] *Church History*.

All this I found on my uncle's book-shelves. A list of books of the same period gives the names of works which I proposed to study, such as: Zohar, Schulkan Aruch (the former, if I am not mistaken Arabic; the latter Talmudic); also Dionysius the Areopagite; Agrippa: *De occulta philosophia*; Swedenborg: *On Heaven and its Wonders and on Hell*, etc. Probably I imagined that I should be able to find these books in the libraries in Copenhagen.

Meanwhile I had to be content with less and with

humanity through the ages; this is perhaps the finest example of his poetry. In the form and style of his poems Rydberg is a Greek, and a follower of Plato in thought and ideals. *The Last of the Athenians* is available in a French translation by Per Lamm.

[1]Goldschmidt (Meyer Aaron), b. 1819—d. 1887, a Danish writer and editor of *The Corsair*, a satirical journal founded by himself in 1840. Though successful because of his piquant style and revolutionary ideas, he was several times, owing to these very qualities, involved in legal prosecutions. He is best known for his novel, *A Jew*, in which he has given a vivid picture of the Jewish surroundings of his boyhood. In *Homeless* he has described the feelings of one who has abandoned the Judaism of his forefathers. He also wrote plays, some of these being performed at the National Theatre. During the Revolution of 1848 and some years previously he visited Europe, his experiences of foreign travel bearing fruit in a review founded by him and entitled *North and South*, by means of which he introduced a cosmopolitan spirit into Denmark. Goldschmidt was a humanitarian as well as a realist and an Oriental mystic. In his *Memoirs* he defines Nemesis as a mysterious power which punishes our bad actions and is connected with the natural magic of life. This idea inspired his play, *A Failing*. One of his novels, *Maser*, has been translated into French.

[2]Martensen (Hans Lassen), b. 1808—d. 1884, was professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen, afterwards became Bishop of Zealand, the chief diocese in Denmark. His work on *Christian Dogma* has become a classic amongst Protestants all over the world. His study of the German mystic Jacob Böhme is another of his best known works.

[3]Hammerich (Peter Frederick Adolf), b. 1809—d. 1877, was military chaplain during the war between Denmark and Prussia in 1848-1851. His chief works are the *History of the Christian Church*, *Sketches of the War in Slesvig*, 1848-1851, the latter being translated into French in 1852. He also wrote a book on Saint Birgitta of Sweden and some studies on ancient Norse poetry.

making up a philosophy for myself with the material available. The young theosophist of Svendborg informs the reader of the list in his book that he intends to deal with the following problems :—

1. The origin of matter and of evil.
   - *a.* Cosmogony and its aim.
   - *b.* Ideas about evil.
   - *c.* Matter and force.
   - *d.* First stirrings of life.
   - *e.* Expediency in the order of Nature and its innermost essence.
2. Life.
   - *a.* The origin of life.
   - *b.* The aim of life.
3. The invisible world.
   - *a.* The good spirits and God. The spirit world.
   - *b.* The evil spirits.
   - *c.* The Essence of God. The Trinity. The Incarnation.
   - *d.* The soul. The spirit.
   - *e.* Language.
   - *f.* Free-will and Grace. Redemption.
   - *g.* The spirits of the dead.
   - *h.* Conscience.
4. The life before and after this life.
   - *a.* Pre-existence.
   - *b.* Transmigration of souls.
   - *c.* Purgatory and *Scheol.*
   - *d.* The state after death.

It is not surprising that my dear mother and my good literary uncle, seeing me plunged in speculations of this kind, were convinced that I was to be a clergyman. They would have been less certain if they had been able to control my studies and the conclusions at which I arrived. As the reader possessed of theological knowledge will already have noticed, the programme given

above is rather far removed from orthodox Lutheranism. The idea of pre-existence, as well as that of purgatory, which I had probably found in Martensen, are heresies from that point of view.

As a matter of fact, I think there was nothing about which I worried less than orthodoxy. One thing only mattered to me: the truth. This feeling of the mystery of the world, which had stirred my heart so profoundly one day in January, returned again and again. It also seemed to me that there must be other means of arriving at knowledge than by those afforded by theology, and I began accordingly to study the natural sciences, particularly that of astronomy. I read with enthusiasm Flammarion's *Inhabited Worlds*, later on *The Universe*, by Guillemin. On many an August night, when myriads of stars illumined the sky, I would stand outside and find the constellations, which I have never since forgotten, those star-friends which since then have been my faithful comrades in all my wanderings, and which everywhere greet me with the same glance as amongst the sombre, whispering trees at home.

Andromeda, with white imploring hands,
The dark-eyed bull, by hand of hero slain,
That demi-god, of mortal mother born;
The diamonds of Cassopeia,
The pearly crown with gleaming gem,
The flashing shield of Sobieski—
These oft I saw, on starry nights above my home.

Yet these old verses do not mention the most radiant wonders of the heavens: Orion, set like a wall-anchor of silver and jewels in the dark-blue wall of a winter night; Sirius, sparkling and gleaming in an unceasing flow of purple and silvery blue and verdigris iridescence; Atäir, Deneb and Vega, the three trembling dewdrops in the chalice of that pale blue flower, the sky of a sum-



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mer night ; Capella, which I saw on a clear white night low down in the northern horizon, bathed in a golden light, shining like the bud of a water-lily in a rosy lake ; Charles's Wain, pointing with its shaft straight to Arcturus, the star which from my small low bed I could see sparkling on clear, frosty nights above the dark trees, and which became the dearest of them all to me.

But as yet it was not beauty I was looking for amongst the stars—it was truth, knowledge, and recognising truth as truth, "a solution without circumlocutions" (as I was later to find Heine expressing it) "of those confounded questions."

The consciousness that the present existence is unique, that there is no other, would not leave me, and kept hold of my heart in a crushing grip. Obscurely but profoundly I felt that, in the words of the Gospel, I was "in the way with an adversary." The evangelical counsel is, "Be at agreement with him—lest perhaps thou be cast into prison and thou shalt not go forth from thence till thou repay the last farthing." But, alas ! I was not inclined to be submissive.

This brings me to another trait in my nature—*my predilection for rebellion.*—Life—as I understood life—was always something outside the ordinary ; it was also outside the law. What I loved was never the regular, the normal—it was always the exceptional, the extraordinary.

Therefore, as I was a heretic in religion, I was socially and politically a rebel. From the very first I felt myself the ally of those who made a path for themselves. It was only child's play, but at the same time that I constructed a Gnostic-Theosophical conception of the world for myself, I eagerly studied in the newspapers the accounts of the doings of the Russian Nihilists. When Alexander II was assassinated my heroes were Sheljaboff and Sophia Perofskaia. Aided by my sister, who was also called Sophia, I founded a revolutionary club.

A little black book of our minutes, which I have kept together with the cabbalistic one, contains the laws of the club. It is all written in a cipher invented by myself, and which I am still able to read. I see that the name of the club was nothing less than "Lucifer"—that its aim was simply to "exterminate the tyrants"—that our reckoning of time was the same as that of the first French Republic (beginning at the year 1789, and with the names of the months: Floréal, Prairéal, Thermidor, etc.) Fortunately for the tyrants of Svendborg, the members of the club never increased to a larger number than six—four of them being women—and the meetings were held in the home of my inseparable friend, Albrecht, the youngest son of our neighbours, the Simonsens. He was a good-looking, lively and intelligent boy, who took absolutely no interest whatever in his work at school. The Simonsens' coal cellar was our club-room, and in order to get into it from the yard one had to go through a sloping, tarred trap-door, walk along a low, dark and damp passage, admirably suited to putting one in a Nihilistic frame of mind; at last reaching the place of meeting, which was but feebly lighted by a small cobweb-covered window on a level with the pavement outside. Here we were well concealed from the police, who were supposed to be on our track—and a solemn silence used to fall upon us when we heard the heavy tread of Ekman's (the policeman's) thick-soled boots in the street outside. The conspirators took their seats here and there on heaps of coal and wood-piles, while the president—or the mystagogue, as he theosophically called himself—took the seat of honour on the chopping-block. From this place he conducted the meeting, the usual proceedings of which were recorded in cipher in the little black book in this order:

1. Reading of the statutes.
2. Initiation and enrolling of new members.

3. Hearing members repeat the cipher.
4. Reading the history of the order.
5. Entering debates on the minutes.

The object of No. 4 on the agenda was that of informing new members that the society had had its first beginnings in the winter of 1877-78. The present mystagogue had then, in company with his faithful Albrecht, raised a troop of Redskins, who, armed with tomahawks of wood and cardboard, and wearing crowns of feathers on their heads and moccasins on their feet, had on moonlight nights carried on raiding expeditions in the snow-covered gardens of the neighbourhood; nay, they had even walked noiselessly on the frozen brook and reached the garden of Mr. Knox, the clerk to the county prefect, and had invaded it for the purpose of carrying off one of that gentleman's pretty daughters, and taking her off to their snow hut in the Simonsens' yard, in which exploit, however, they did not succeed.

Reminiscences of this kind would naturally interest the mystagogue and the other quondam Redskin, but in the long run they would bore Sophia Perofskaia and the other feminine members of the club. The little black minute-book therefore contains on one of its last pages the following very significant proposal: "Something more interesting to be provided." And when the sunshine and the spring came—the spring of 1882—the trap-door of the Nihilistic coal-cellar was closed for ever, and the mystagogue began a lover's diary, in which were recorded the unvarying items of a journal of this kind, though each new one has its own form.

April 23. 1 p.m. Saw her.
April 30. Spoke to her.
May 5. 11 a.m. Sunny and warm. Met her and her sister.
9 p.m. Met her alone at the cemetery.

May 7th. She was in the garden. We played games.
May 9th. She was here with Albrecht. He does not deserve her!
May 15th. She was in the garden. Left her game to speak to me.
May 24th. 9 to 9.15 p.m. Talked for a quarter of an hour with *her*.

"Her"—it was about her that I sat day-dreaming when I ought to have been learning my lessons; it was she who called me away from my duties, from my theosophical meditations, from my revolutionary coal-cellar. To her I wrote my first bad verses.

Even here there was a past, something to which I looked back wistfully—for I had known her earlier, the previous spring and summer. Then we had "broken it off" (boys' love affairs have their breaks just like those of grown-up people); and now memories were sweeping in upon me and I was longing for the past. But now, during the long light evenings in May, the love and happiness of the previous year came back. We did not play games any more, or at least only seldom. A casual encounter, an exchange of greetings in the street, a word or two from garden to garden, that was all. Later, with the coming of June, when it was really summer and the "white" nights had come, and all the streets of Svendborg were fragrant with the perfume of elder-blossom in the small gardens between the low-storied houses, it was the time of evening talks. The long talks we used to have, sitting on the stone steps outside the Simonsens' house, and which were much more grown-up than anyone suspected; and altogether, is it not a mistake to think that children are childlike? Children are *serious*, and to preserve a childlike mind means to preserve the serious outlook on life. "I know what I will do," I wrote in my diary after an

evening of this kind. What I meant to do was simply this: to go to Copenhagen, go on with my reading, pass my examinations, come home again and marry her! A simple programme—and a beautiful one—and if I had realised it, well—the world would have had one happy husband and conscientious government official more and one poet less! But it was not written in the stars that my lot in life was to be so pleasant.

With June came Whitsuntide, but I did not see her, except far away from me and mine, going about festively attired with her equally festive relations: sisters, aunts, nieces, nephews—I only saw her in the distance. In Svendborg there are three Whitsuntide holidays, the festivities reaching their climax on the third. But the diary contains only laconic notes on the weather, followed by these words (in English): *Remarkable, that absence can do so much of sorrow. Only seen her at a distance*, but then comes the consoling thought (in Latin this time!): *Tamen spero, nam volo. Et voluntas potestas est.* "Yet I hope, for I will. And will is power."

Yes, I willed, I hoped, but my heart was sore with longing. I came home dead tired from my wanderings in sun and dust amongst the gay holiday crowds, in which I looked for one alone. Went down to the garden, to the summer-house, and lay down on a hard, uncomfortable wooden bench, lay there staring up at the green leaves and the blue evening sky amongst the foliage—and wrote her dear name in the air, invisibly, as it was written, invisibly, but indelibly, on my heart.

Whitsuntide came to an end and I saw her again on June 19th, when the diary records, "She was there (at the Simonsens'). Had a talk. She was called upstairs. Called down "good-night" to me." June 25th. Saw her. A moment's talk. *Ignis videns eam in me est.*"

The Latin-writing mystagogue now passed his preliminary examination and even did well at it. Then

came the holidays and the height of summer. The diary records meeting after meeting—he now escorts her home when they meet.

July 14th was drawing near, the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille—a memorable date for the mystagogue—and besides this, the date of the annual fair in Svendborg.

Ah! that summer fair in Svendborg, I wonder, is it still what it was in the old days, when we used to go about in the market-place to watch the people setting up the booths? Everywhere there was a noise of hammering and of the creaking of packing-cases being opened. Men stood on chairs with their mouths full of tacks, fixing up sign-boards. There was a litter everywhere of straw and packing-paper and pieces of string, and Ekman, the policeman, stood quietly looking on.

And then the day itself! It was always, as one of the local papers said, "favoured by the finest weather." You started the day in your best summer suit and went out early, provided with a new threepenny piece, which melted away with astonishing rapidity, so that you had to go home for reinforcements. Ah! that summer fair, with its crowds of peasants and townsfolk amongst the white tents—that summer fair with its smell of newly-varnished toys and of ginger-bread heated by the sun—that summer fair with the first ripe Spanish cherries (a penny a packet) and with the lemonade booth, at the rough counter of which a timid and infatuated boy ventured to spend a halfpenny for the sake of seeing "Her" putting the sparkling and rosy drink to her fresh, rosy lips. "Aren't you having some too?" she asked. "No, I am not thirsty," he lied—not for all the world would he have let her know that he had spent his last coin on her.

Perhaps she guessed it, though, for she grew silent and together they left the noise and bustle of the fair.

"I am going out to the cemetery," she said, "are you coming?" By quiet, old lanes, where the eaves of the roofs reach down almost to the street, they reached the cemetery and went up to her father's grave. Then she took off her straw hat, unlocked the rake and spade from the chain by which they were fastened to the railing, and the mystagogue was given the task of fetching water in the green watering-can. Blissfully happy, he fetched all the water she cared to ask for; it was a joy to carry away the weeds for her. A generation has gone by since then, but he will never forget that quiet, golden-sunny afternoon in the cemetery at Svendborg, where the jasmine shed its perfume and where a thrush was singing so sweetly——

There is still another memory of this kind, and it is perhaps the most beautiful. One summer evening, probably soon after that day at the fair, when she was on a visit to a married relative, she had come in to see us. We had been having games in the garden, my three sisters, "she" and I. Then the smallest of my sisters grew tired and sleepy, and "she" offered to go upstairs and put the little one to bed. My two other sisters stayed in the garden but I followed her and my little sister upstairs. We found the house empty—my father and mother and my uncle, who lived with us, were out for a walk; she and I and the little sister were alone in the house. It was growing dusk, the windows were open to the garden, behind the dark trees and behind the motionless arms of the wind-mill in West Street the evening sky was golden. She moved about in a housewifely way in the darkening rooms—undressed the child, put her to bed and tucked her in, folded up the clothes and laid them neatly on a chair. I stood there looking on, full of a tranquil happiness, as if she and I were already in our own home.

The diary tells of one or two more evening encounters and talks. One of them occurred at the "jetty," a

favourite resort in the evening, as there was a cool breeze after the hot summer day. She generally sat beside her mother on one of the benches under the lime trees near the small fountain. I had permission to go and speak to her, and, followed by the watchful eyes of her mother, we walked out to the end of the jetty, about a hundred paces away, to where the red harbour light stood on its sun-cracked post, and the steamer could be seen coming back from Kristiansminde, its red and green lanterns casting beautiful reflections in the water —or the moon rising over the dark coast of Taasinge, throwing her silver bridge across the water to us—a shimmering, undulating, insecure bridge, on which we were never to walk together.

The departure for Copenhagen came suddenly, leaving no time for good-byes, and thus it happened that the boy of scarcely sixteen years old, who stepped out on the platform of the railway station in Copenhagen one evening near the end of the summer in 1882, dragging a clumsy green carpet-bag after him, was not only a seeker after truth who had come to find the philosopher's stone, and a revolutionary dreamer who wanted to rid the world of tyrants—he was also, and above all, an exile from happiness and with a backward glance he entered upon his youth.

# THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

*The oracular vapour*
*Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth*
*And call truth, virtue, love, genius or joy,*
*That maddening wine of life . . . . .*

SHELLEY.

## I

*Sustineo, ergo sum.* I suffer, therefore I exist. In these three words the boy from Svendborg summed up his experiences after having for three months attended a grammar school in Copenhagen. He suffered, for he had made a terrible discovery—he had found out that he was ugly.

At home he had not been aware of it. He had grown up amongst the other boys at school, and they were used to his looks. Even " she " never seemed to have given a thought to her adorer's indisputable plainness.

But now he had been put into the fifth form of a Copenhagen grammar school to be prepared for the University. He was handicapped by his very name, which ended in 'sen; his new schoolfellows had short, distinguished, unordinary names: Koch, From, Lundsgaard, Mourier, Schultz. His clothes put him at a disadvantage; although dark blue, by a strange trick of fate they had a tendency to turn reddish at the edges, and the sailor's son was derisively asked whether his garments had been caulked with pitch. One of the boys, whose profile was even then clear cut and intellectual, said with a superior air, " I am glad I don't look so idiotic as ' Homo novus ' !" And " Homo novus," the new man, winced at the smarting taunt.

But when he was back again in his own room and alone he recovered his spirits, and hope and hate burst into flame: hate of the privileged, the handsome, the rich; hope of the re-adjustment of values, of revolution, of the downfall of the gods, of the day of doom. Then his pen would race wildly across the paper, writing such words as these:

"To be scorned and baited, tortured and mocked from morning till night—that is my life! Whichever way I look, there is not one friendly or compassionate face. I don't understand why I am always to be laughed at. This extraordinary behaviour to me, this instant mockery that meets me at every turn—I have not interfered with anybody. Why can't I be left in peace? If they were to flog me with red-hot whips it would hurt less than this perpetual mockery! It is so degrading. I can lift up my soul to the eternal spirit of the world, I can enjoy the immortal beauty in a poet's writings, I can penetrate with philosophers and naturalists into the secrets of Nature, and yet at that *damned* school I have to be the target of every wretched little joke-maker, every heartless mocker. And I hate them, as fervently as a man has ever hated, but how am I going to get even with them?" (December 13th, 1882).

Not being able to avenge himself, "Homo novus" leaves it to God to avenge him.

"Yes, rejoice, X," the diary says, with special reference to the handsome, merciless son of a government official—"enjoy yourself in this world, on this miserable earth, which is already in its last throes! On every hand one hears of murders and other crimes, of dynamite and rebellion, 'wars and rumours of wars.' When the deeps of the earth are opened, when the flames of the abyss shoot up towards the stars, when the sun shall be darkened and the moon be turned into blood, when the seas shall rise and storms shall rage over the earth and destroy everything, and when at last in the roar of thun-

der the Son of Man shall be seen in the clouds of heaven, then He will exalt the humble in this world and put down the mighty from their seats. Then will come the reign of everlasting peace, when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, when a child shall play near the den of the cockatrice—then shall all the faithful of the Lord be for ever with our Father in Heaven. Yes, come soon, Lord Jesus!" (November 30th).

The boy from the middle-class home is here invoking a Nihilistic Christ, a Messias destructor. Often, though, the tone is gentler—the thirst for revenge gives way to devout patience:

"The Kingdom of God is reached only by a path of suffering and endurance. Endure, then, all mockeries and insults, endure everything done to you, endure being struck without striking back, endure having your best feelings and your personal peculiarities laughed at. God will richly reward you, but only beyond the gates of death. [Same day, later.] If it were not for death life would be unbearable. Death is the great mark of interrogation which bears me up."

Devoutly he begins his seventeenth year with this prayer: "Lord, grant me thy grace that in the coming year I may advance in the imitation of Christ. And tell me, Lord, what is life, the *true* life, here on earth?"

In another place he prays, "Thou great spirit of the world, our Father in Heaven! Give me, give me a task such as thou gavest to Attila, to Luther, as thou gavest to Voltaire—as thou gavest to countless others—give also to me. Great God, comfort me! Thou art my Father, thou wilt help me in all things. I have none other upon whom I can lean. Thou alone canst sustain me. Let not the devouring waves of everyday life swallow me up, but make a way through them for me. Thou art the King and thou art the Saviour, my God and Lord. Adonäi . ." (October 29th).

A strange prayer, in which Attila, Luther and Voltaire

are placed side by side as three of the messengers of God, and three examples to be followed. Revolution and religion still walk hand in hand—the God whom he invokes is he who rains fire upon the earth to devour cities, "Who hath removed mountains, and they whom he overthrew in his wrath, knew it not. Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Who commandeth the sun and it riseth not: and shutteth up the stars as it were under a seal. Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and walketh upon the waves of the sea" (Job ix, 5, 6, 7, 8).

Feeling his own weakness, he appealed to a God of *strength*; in his inmost heart he sighed: "Lord, I am so lonely, so forsaken. My life is so poor" (November 5th) and thus explains his own entirely inexplicable sadness: "It is perhaps mostly a grief at the existence of time and space. Upward, then! Away from time and space! Jesus Christ is the Way" (October 29th).

Until all comfort, all faith fails him, and then he suddenly sees himself in all his hideousness, which cannot be softened down by any prayers, nor burnt away by any flaming indignation. He collapses before the pitiless mirror, and in despair contemplates his snub nose, his big, stupid mouth with its thick lips—then in his rage he draws furious caricatures of himself in his diary and with a shaking hand writes underneath them: "This is the great thinker, poet and reformer! What an intelligent face!" The rest of the page is covered with wild effusions and flourishes, written with a spluttering pen, concluding at the bottom with the outburst, "I am going mad; *Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani*!"

Under the load of this despair, and crushed by this loathing of himself, the boy at the grammar school went home for his first Christmas holidays. And like a thorough boy, he kept all his troubles to himself, unburdened himself to no one, not even his eldest sister, who was usually his confidant. He enjoyed his Christ-

mas, he wept at parting, and on January 4th he was again "out in a cold, strange world." He had not dared to raise his eyes to "her" during the Christmas holidays in Svendborg. And yet his thoughts are always returning to the town on the shores of the Sound, to the happiness of childhood and his boyhood's love. "Svendborg—I wish I was there! I think of the gardens, of the harbour, of all the walks, of our games and our pleasures, of the cool summer evenings and the clear blue sky. But it is all so far away from me. The days that are gone will never come back, the moment passes and never returns." Happiness is lost and also what is left of it. Again he is overwhelmed by the thought of his own littleness. "I had better drink of the waters of Lethe and as soon as possible leave the banquet where there is no place for me" (January 27th).

Driven out of Paradise and shrinking from reality, he takes refuge among books. Already he is no longer reading theology and theosophy, though a list of the books to be procured still contains Schleiermacher's *Monologues* (Discourses on Religion), Schiller's *Geisterseher*, Mendelssohn's *Phädon*, all of course in cheap popular editions. But after them come Calderon's *Das Leben ein Traum*, Herder's *Stimmen der Völker*, Lenau's *Savonarola*, Hoffman's *Der goldene Topf*, Lavater's *Worte des Herzens*. Together with the Bible, which he had brought with him from home, he reads Goethe's *Faust*, and the latter more than the former. He contemplates with longing the poetry, as yet unknown to him, of Tieck, Novalis, Fouqué, Kerner, Schlegel, Zacharias Werner—all the German writers of the romantic school, of whom he had read in the *Main Currents* of Georg Brandes. He looks still further ahead, to Edgar Allan Poe, to the French romantic writers, to Pascal.

## II

And now I must speak about Christianshavn, that old quarter of Copenhagen, which became the scene of a life in Faust moods and Faust studies. Not the modern Christianshavn with its asphalt roadways and electric light, and reached by an ultra-modern drawbridge with counter-weights, but the old, badly-lit, badly-paved, provincially quiet and provincially homely Christianshavn, which was reached by an old bridge painted grey and provided with three large leather-covered iron balls, which were considerately raised aloft five minutes before the bridge was to be opened; and even then there was always a dog that had wandered on to one of the opened bascules, and at last in the self-abandonment of despair had to let itself slide down from a position that was getting more and more dangerous.

This was the Knippel Bridge, on which one would stop to look out at the harbour in the early dusk of a winter evening on coming back from school at the other end of the town. On the Copenhagen side a steamer was moored at the quay and being unloaded by the light of two large flares—there were no arc lamps in those days. The winches whirred and screeched, hissing white steam rose in the air, the torches sent out trembling columns of fire over the dark water.

Instead of going straight home to the lodgings in Brogade 7, one would perhaps take a short walk in Christianshavn, or go for an evening stroll—after having dinner in the little stuffy dining-room, which was also the bedroom of the shoemaker and his wife with whom one lodged. The prevailing fare consisted of fruit soup made with barley or sago, and roast pork, the latter as a rule being excellent—but what does a young dreamer care about even the crispest cracklings!

At any cost he must go out to walk in the fresh evening air and the cold darkness. Not down the Market

Street, which was far too brightly lit and too crowded, but down the narrow side-streets, those above and below the canal, and especially the two running along the southern rampart. Even early in the evening they were quite deserted, the few lamps gave but a feeble light; in the long and bare wall-surfaces of the low-storied houses lights shone behind small windows, the sills of which were filled with plants in pots, like those in Svendborg. The blinds were never pulled down, there was only a screen of straw-matting placed against the window-pane—again like Svendborg. The walk went along the banks of the canal by long wharves. The water gurgled between the posts of the wharf—with a familiar sound—as when one came back in the evening at home, and ran the boat up to the landing-stage, when the sail was furled and suddenly the glug-glug of the waves was heard under the boat, and their slapping against the pillars of the bridge—it was not heeded then, but now it acquired a value; its effect was that of awakening the longing for home. And when was it, exactly? I think it was when my father had taken us out for a sail—to Taasinge—and we ran the boat in at the Taasinge landing-stage on a clear dark-blue summer night with a pale light in the north. Was it on that night that someone said there were crabs in the boat? But there were no crabs at all, it was my father pinching our calves under the seat of the boat, and my mother laughed.

The walk continues along the waterside. On the opposite bank of the canal the black chimneys of Burmeister and Wain's engineering works are outlined against the pale grey moonlight. The deserted and dingy canal bends away amongst dark timber-yards. A barge is moored at the side and tugs at its ropes.

Then the walk leads into the long street with the rope-walk beside the rampart, on which the trees are black against the moonlit air. Down here slow steps

are heard, the trailing of a skirt over withered leaves, two murmuring voices—and the Long Bridge is reached, the old Long Bridge. People are standing and fishing against the iron railing; one stops to look down, hears the patient plop of the float, sees the untiring up-and-down of the angler's arm. The water flows in a current under the bridge and ripples about the boats at the bathing-house; they are all turned in the same direction —that of the current.

The moon comes out from between the clouds above the Kalvebod quay, and throws a broad streak of light upon it. The silver-scaled water hurries incessantly in over this moon-path and out again. Behind the black land-stripe of Amager the Baltic Sea quivers like a thin silver thread in the moonlight of a winter evening.

And so home, with a face that is refreshed and cool. There is the shoemaker's shop to pass, there is a corner of the sitting-room to cross—then past a little dark room, in which sleeps the daughter of the house—then there is the kitchen, where the washing-up is done, and through which one goes with a troubled conscience—such as one cannot help having in regard to those who stand there getting their hands red in greasy water from washing the plates and knives and forks which one has deigned to use at one's meals. You make yourself small, you say a polite "Good evening" and "Good-night," then you are outside on the stairs—was anything said behind you?

The stairs are the back-stairs, but they are also winding-stairs, and this fact makes them more attractive to a young poet.

Then you step into the room—it is an attic—and find yourself in the cell of Doctor Faustus!

Doctor Faustus—of course this would suit an old mystagogue and theosophist! How many readers of *Faust* can say, without referring to notes, what a pentagram is? "Homo novus" knew—the boy of Svend-

borg had turned the leaves of the same book as the boy of Frankfurt. At the top of the calendar which he had written out himself, and which he always had before him, he had drawn the very same mystic, five-starred figure, which, according to Kabbala's teaching, contains within itself the highest interests of mankind. The pentagon in the middle signifies the five great mysteries : the creation of the world, the life after death, the invisible world, death, the end of the world. The five triangles which form the five points of the star signify the five worlds of the spirit : of the angels, the redeemed souls, the human beings now living, the lost souls, the demons. In the centre of this comprehensive sign stood the Hebrew name of God—Tetragrammaton—and on either side was drawn the Egyptian winged sun, the meaning of which was " the victorious Good," and the scarabæus, symbolising " creative Nature " (*natura naturans*), as Jacob Böhme says.

From the three low-placed windows with small greenish panes there was a view across old red roofs, projecting attics, pointed chimneys—a horizon well adapted to make an impression of mediæval and Gothic atmosphere on a susceptible mind. The low-ceiled room had a bed in one corner, a table beneath the window, a small, rusty stove with a rusty pipe into the projecting chimney, and soon—like Faust's cell—it was lined from floor to ceiling with books and papers, "which worms devour and dust covers up." Books had been brought from home, books were sent from home from the much-reading uncle, books were bought in cheap editions, sometimes at a second-hand dealer's on the way home from school. Books were also written ; in March 1883 the diary has this entry : " Put the finishing touches to ' Literature and Art in the Middle Ages."

In spite of the Faustian room, the period of Faustian studies had come to an end. Theosophy, notwithstanding the pentagram, was abandoned for ever. On

the other hand, the sympathy with revolutionary ideas grew warmer. The atmosphere of Copenhagen and the daily reading of Herman Bang's[1] articles in the *Nationaltidende* had their effect and the revolutionary movements here and there in Europe in 1883 were followed with increasing interest. It is curious to find again, in the childishly serious notes of the grammar school boy, all the names that are now forgotten. "Out of sixty Nihilists accused," say the notes, "seventeen have to appear before the court, amongst them being the cheesemonger Koboseff, the naval officers, Grehve, Snarski, Kalushni, Budsevitsch, Gratschevski, the veterinary surgeon, Pribilof and his wife, Madame Anna Pavlovna Korba, etc." It is like reading a list of the persons in a novel by Tolstoi or Dostojevski. March 9th has this entry: "Vera Philipovna arrested in St. Petersburg. She is believed to be the chief of the Terrorists." "March 17th: Bands of the Black Hand in Spain and Portugal, Irredentist troubles in Italy, Anarchistic ones in Paris, Fenian dynamite explosion in London, Nihilist persecution in Russia." More and more clearly is the youth's religion turning into revolution. More and more the longing for the day of judgment is changing into a longing for "the great smash-up." The outcast from the world of the right-thinking, the well-off and, alas! the well-featured, necessarily feels drawn to the Red International. With enthusiasm he ranges

[1]Bang (Herman), b. 1857, d. 1912. A Danish writer who was born in Slesvig and belonged to a family of government officials, professors and politicians. As a dramatic critic he was successful, mainly, perhaps, because of his ironical style, which was afterwards adopted in Danish journalism. In his novels he is ruthless in his description of degenerates, of mediocrities lacking will-power, and allowing themselves to be ruled by circumstances. This was counteracted by the charm of his personality which was felt in his writings. His art is seen at its best in his small pictures of provincial life. His best known work is the novel *Hopeless Generations* which was suppressed at the time by the Censor. Another novel, *Tine*, has been translated into French, and describes an episode of the the war between Denmark and Prussia in 1864. After spending the last years of his life in various countries in Europe he died in America in 1912.

himself by the side of Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann; he quotes one of his speeches in *An Enemy of the People*: "Officials stand in the way of every free man; it would be a good thing if we could exterminate them like other obnoxious tyrants." "Exterminate the tyrants" —"Homo novus" asked for nothing better!

And now he began to read "modern" authors.

At home in Svendborg his uncle Jörgen's library had especially comprised classical literature: Danish, Swedish, German, French, English. Here, in twenty small volumes, bound in green calf, were Goethe's complete works; here were Schiller and Tieck, Heine and Hoffman, Chamisso, Uhland and Mörike; here were all the Danish classics; there stood also the Swedish, Atterbom[1] and Geijer,[2] Tegner[3] and Stagnelius.[4] There

[1]Atterbom and Stagnelius are the founders of Swedish romanticism. Atterbom, b. 1790, d. 1855, founded the society of *Aurora* while still a student in Upsala, and the review *Phosphorus*, which had for its aim the opposition of classic tradition and the propaganda of romantic ideas and the philosophy of Schelling, from whom he derived the theme of his cycle of poems, *The Flowers*, which deals with the close ties by which man is attached to Nature. He is reminiscent of Shakespeare in his fairy tales, *The Blue Bird* and *The Island of Happiness*, though they are inspired by his reading of Celtic poetry, through the medium of Madame D'Aulnoy. It was not till after his death that his poetry was valued at its true worth. Atterbom also wrote a series of biographies of Swedish poets—*Seers and Poets*—in which his style is distinguished by its clearness and harmony.

[2]Geijer, (Erik Gustav), b. 1783, d. 1847, was a historian, poet, orator and composer of music, and had a great influence on the political and intellectual life of Sweden in the nineteenth century. He belonged at first to the romantic school of literature and the Conservative party in politics, but afterwards became a Liberal and founded Liberalism in Sweden. As a historian he wrote a *History of the Swedish People*, but only completed the introduction and a part which concludes at the abdication of Christina (1825). Another historical work is his *Sketch of the State of Sweden during the Parliamentary Period*, 1718-1772 (1838). His method in writing history was new in introducing the national point of view. He was also the first to understand the value of folk-lore.

[3]Esaias Tegnèr, b. 1787, d. 1846. The greatest poet in Sweden in the nineteenth century. In his ideas and his lucid style he is a disciple of the French classics, but he is a descendant of Rousseau in his romanticism, in allowing his personal feelings to predominate. His best known poem is *Fridtjof's Saga*, which is characterised by an idyllic grace, while there is an epic amplitude in *The First Communicants* and *Abel*. Tegnèr was

were Dante and Shakespeare in translations, and beside them stood Byron's works, Thomas Moore, Tennyson, Longfellow—here he saw for the first time the yellow, French covers, containing Lamartine, Hugo, Chateaubriand . . .

But one was not allowed to read everything. For a long time Aarestrup's[1] poems and Oehlenschläger's[2]

bishop of Vaxiö and was also a great orator, his voice being heard on most of the greater events in Sweden in his time. He was an ardent admirer of Napoleon, and was the only person of influence who ventured to express disapproval of the alliance of Bernadotte with Alexander I against the Emperor of the French. His devotion to Napoleon inspired him to write *The Hero*, after the battle of Leipzig. He also wrote *The Reawakening of the Eagle* after the return of Napoleon from Elba, and in 1831 he wrote *The Tomb of Napoleon*. In his correspondence Tegnèr shows himself as a charming and brilliant man of the world, displaying also a gift for keen observation and a great wealth of ideas.

[4]Stagnelius (1793-1823) was, like Tegnèr, a bishop of the Lutheran Church in Sweden, and did not become known as a poet until after his death. He has much in common with Chateaubriand, by whom he was greatly influenced, and one of his dramas is even entitled *Martyrs*. He found inspiration in the Norse sagas for the poem entitled *Gunlög*, and the two tragedies, *Visbur* and *Sigurd Ring*. Amongst other works may be mentioned *The Lilies of Sharon* and *The Bacchantes*.

[1]Aarestrup (Karl Ludvig Emil), b. 1800, d. 1856. A doctor of medicine who wrote poetry in his leisure time, and who lived most of his life on the island of Laaland. Published in 1837 a collection of poems which were hardly noticed at the time and not valued as they deserved until after his death. His *Posthumous Poems* were published in 1863. He was a master of the technique of verse, but his poetry is strongly stamped by sensuality, and as speculative poetry was more in favour at that time in Denmark, his writings were not appreciated as they would have been by the generation that acclaimed the vivid colouring of Drachmann's verse.

[2]Oehlenschläger (Adam), b. 1779, d. 1850. Introduced romanticism into Denmark and sprang into instant fame with a poem entitled *The Golden Horns*. (It relates the irreparable loss of two drinking-horns of prehistoric antiquity, which had been found by a peasant girl in a ploughed field in Slesvig, and which were afterwards stolen from the Museum of Northern Antiquities in Copenhagen. The thief was found, but the horns had been melted down, and so were irrecoverably lost. A replica can, however, be seen in the Musée St. Germain, near Paris.) Oehlenschläger stayed for some time at Weimar, and was one of the friends of Goethe. He also visited Coppet, and is mentioned by Madame de Stael in *De l'Allemagne*. He chose his subjects from the East, as in *Aladdin or the Wonderful Lamp* and *Aly and Gulhyndy* mentioned above, or from the Sagas, as in *Hakon Jarl*, *Baldur the Good*, *The Saga of Vaulundur*, *The Gods of the North*, *The Varings of Miklagard*. His play, *Axel and Valborg*, is always

*Aly and Gulhyndy* were forbidden—though only with the result that both were read in secret, upstairs in the garret, sitting on his father's green-painted sea-chest, and the boy could not understand why on earth he was not allowed to read these books.

Thus, even as not all classical literature was allowed, much less was the modern. On his birthday in January my uncle usually liked to invite the other masters from the school to come and drink a cup of coffee in the evening. On these occasions the awe-inspiring persons of the class-rooms filled not only my uncle's book-lined room, where we were used to seeing him occupied in reading or in correcting exercises, but they overflowed into our sitting-room, and the boy saw to his surprise that these solemn-looking, spectacled and bearded gentlemen could laugh, drink coffee and eat Christmas cakes in all their Danish varieties—home-made by my mother. The guests always complimented her on the excellence of her baking, to which my mother modestly answered that she was afraid the Yule-cake was a little "heavy." "No, indeed it is not, Mrs. Jörgensen, it is exactly as it ought to be."

Here, over the cups with the stimulating coffee, modern literature was discussed, weighed and found wanting. When we children were younger we were generally sent to bed earlier, being comforted with one of our favourite small cakes, which we could eat in bed. This, by the way, resulted in the bed getting full of crumbs, so that at last my mother had to come in, brush the crumbs off the sheet and tuck us in, but we did not go to sleep, because it was so cosy to lie in the dark and see the strip of light through the door standing ajar, and listen to the voices of our elders and the clinking of the coffee-cups and spoons.

well received on the Scandinavian stage. In 1829 he was acclaimed by Tegnèr as the sovereign poet of the north. He inaugurated the "Golden Age" of Danish poetry, displaying in his poems and dramatic works a knowledge of the resources of Danish hitherto unknown.

But as time went on and one grew older one was allowed to stay up when the visitors came. Then one would hear discussions about "this Ibsen," "this Brandes,"[1] "this Drachmann,"[2] now and then also about "this Zola" (with the accent on the first syllable: Sola). Most of what they wrote did not seem to be any good; to be sure Ibsen had written earlier and quite admirable works, such as *The Pretenders*, and, in some parts of it, *Brand*, but his latest play, now, this Nora, or whatever her name was, who runs away from her husband, is that supposed to be edifying to the mind?

That was the judgment passed in Svendborg. But since then the boy from the secondary school had advanced to the grammar school in Copenhagen and had found his way to Ibsen for himself. He had also found Brandes, and Brandes had led him to Taine and Renan.

[1]Brandes (Georg), b. 1842—d. 1927. Should be too well known for any mention of his career as a critic to be necessary here. During the years 1870-1890 he may be said to have held the office of literary dictator in Denmark, as the present book sufficiently indicates. To English readers he is best known through his work, *Main Currents in the Literature of the Nineteenth Century* and his monograph on Shakespeare. A visit to France in his youth brought him under the influence of Taine and Renan, whose ideas he brought with him on his return to Denmark in 1866. In his work as a critic he adopted the method of Sainte Beuve, that is, of analysing a literary work without any regard to its moral bias. This method he also adopted in his lectures at the University, where he was first a lecturer, afterwards becoming a professor in 1883. It was due to him that Nietzsche became known throughout Europe, and he has the merit of having supported Ibsen by his advice and encouragement. He was the champion of oppressed nationalities, such as the Polish, but opposed democracy and progress in Denmark when the parties which had striven for them came into power. Amongst his last works are: *Napoleon and Garibaldi; Wolfgang Goethe*, 1915; *François de Voltaire*, 1916–17; *Michelangelo Buonarotti*, 1921; *Caius Julius Cæsar* and *Homer*, 1922.

[2]Drachmann (Holger), b. 1846—d. 1898, devoted himself particularly to describing the sea, in verses which were brilliant and powerful and new in rhythm. He was also new in choosing the heroes of his prose stories among fisher folk. Coming under the influence of Georg Brandes, he professed revolutionary and internationalist ideas, but abandoned them later after a visit to Slesvig, of which he gave an account in *Beyond the Frontier*. Later, in 1881, in *Old and New Gods* he broke away from the literary Left and wrote in support of the rights of idealism and patriotism.

And now, besides school books, there lay on the red, ink-stained cover on his table, *An Enemy of the People*, the two first volumes of *Main Currents*, Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, (in a cheap edition at one krone).[1] Faust, in a small, richly-bound, gilt-edged edition, still occupied the place of honour. But it soon had to rub shoulders with Byron's *Manfred* and Byron's *Cain* (in a translation). All clothed in the same colour, that of revolution.

Of revolution—and despair. "Have read Byron's *Manfred* and seen my own future in it," cries the boy, in May. And further on: "Life is hard to get through. God did not ask me whether I wanted to come into it. The greatest satisfaction would be not to exist at all. Nirvana."

But life, Sansara, not the nothingness of Nirvana, spoke from a little framed photograph of Svendborg, seen from the hills above the town, and showing the two churches, and the Sound lying like a lake between the coasts, with the long ridge of Taasinge and the low crests of the forests and Bregninge church. When you looked at the picture through a magnifying lens (and "Homo novus," who had been an ardent botanist at home, possessed a lens) you could distinguish the roof of No. 15 in Our Lady's Lane, the roof of the Simonsens' house next door—in fact, the large trees in the two gardens. But *her* house could not be seen—it was hidden behind Our Lady's church in one of the small, old streets, but it *was* there. It *was* there, "*she*" was there, "she" was *there*.

And when came the month of May all the old memories came with it.

[1] About 1s. 1d.

## III

It is the last evening of the first summer holiday at home. In those days the summer vacation lasted only four weeks—exactly four weeks—and now they have come to an end.

Everybody else in the house is in bed—I have wanted to stay up alone—and my mother has given me a last light kiss on my forehead and gone to bed. "Good-night, old man!" (I was the eldest—and old in manner).

I sit by the open window in the quiet room on the first floor overlooking the garden. It was in this room that "she" had walked to and fro, one summer evening only a year ago, and put my little sister to bed.

I had seen "her" the very first evening and, as it happened, on the 14th of July; I was with my mother at the cemetery to look after our burial ground; "she" was with her mother to attend to theirs—we passed them, "a slight bow" is recorded in the diary.

And later . . . later? An encounter here—a meeting there—but how could *Homo novus* dare to raise his eyes to "her?" I knew *now* how I looked! I saw *now* how fair she was!

I had to be content, then, with making pilgrimages to all the shrines—of the first spring as of the second summer—to sit there in solitude and dream about "then"—and carve her dear name, the difficult initials of that loved name, in the bark of a great beech in the heart of the thickest wood. There it was to remain indelibly graven for all time, as it was enshrined in my heart.

And then I had to be satisfied with looking out all the German verses I could find in ploughing afresh through my uncle's collection of books, about unhappy love, and writing them out in an exercise book which I always carried about with me. A poem by Franzos entitled

"Anna" had particularly seized my imagination—did it not fit me, in its ardent feelings?

*Und musst' auch sterben und verglühn*
*das Glück jener Sommertage,*
*Noch fühl ich's mir im Herzen blühn*
*wie süsse, traute Sage.*
*Oft seh' ich dich in stiller Stund*
*wie droben unter der Linde—*
*dein Augen blitzt, und es lacht dein Mund,*
*und dein Goldhaar flutet im Winde.*
*Bis Thränen trüben die holde Gestalt*
*mir armem träumendem Thoren,*
*bis mich's ergreift mit Schmerzensgewalt*
*dass du mir auf ewig verloren!*

That about the "golden hair" did not quite fit—"she" had raven locks. But I had seen them hanging loose one evening after an exciting game, they had fallen about her warm and glowing face, and she had shaken them like coiling serpents and looked so radiantly beautiful.

But all this was over, irrevocably over—"neglected," as another of Germany's unhappily infatuated poets sang:

*Ich ziehe finster des Weges*
*der ferne von deinem liegt,*
*von deinem Pfade, dem stillen,*
*der nie zu meinem sich biegt.*

*Und ob wir wandern und fragen*
*und suchen, ich und du,*
*nie neigen getrennte Bahnen*
*auf's neue einander sich zu.*

*Wir haben allein die Sonne*
*am weiten Himmel gemein,*
*und wenn's mich einsam umnachtet,*
*schliesst gleiches Dunkel dich ein.*

But now the last night had come, the night that enfolded " her " and me here in our native town. Down there were the two gardens, the gardens of our spring-time games. The trees loomed dark against the sky, a soft wind made them whisper. Then the moon rose and shed its pale light on the tree-tops, the clock in the church of Our Lady struck eleven, and far away in the sleeping town, perhaps out in the slumbering country, a dog barked monotonously, persistently, as dogs do bark at night. The moon rose and I sat on, listening to that far-off sound of a dog giving tongue in a distant farm-yard, far out over the moonlit roads of the sleeping land. And I was dying of longing, I, who was but seventeen years old.

## IV

Ardent, despairing prayer. Is Heaven really to become empty for me ?

I asked myself this question one day in the spring of 1884, and it looked as though my fears were to be realised. Again and again I had knocked at the gate of heaven, with the faith to which has been promised the power to move mountains. Yet again and again I had fallen to the ground outside and had cried to the Eternal : " My God, my God, have pity on me ! Canst thou not hear, then ? Wilt thou not listen ? Art thou heartless ? Or art thou dead ?"

It really seemed as though God were dead—or that He was heartless. After a time I slowly gave Him up.

After a time and slowly too, my position amongst my comrades at school had improved. It had already begun when I went into the sixth form, because a new boy had come then and his name, like mine, ended in 'sen, and he, too, had a snub nose ! My heart went out to him from the very first day, for the sake both of the

name and the nose—there were two of us now! He was a radical like myself and we became friends, associates, fellow-conspirators.

Now had come the time to start a revolutionary propaganda—we were to be partners in editing a paper, a hectographed one, the dream of every boy at school who is worth his salt.

During the time I had lived in Copenhagen, about eighteen months, I had continued the reading of the world's literature, following a chance thread or driven by my sympathies. I noted with satisfaction that my collection of books already comprised 223 volumes, and of course these did not include school text books. I had therefore ample supplies to draw upon and in the first number of my paper (in January 1884), I was able to present the following list of contents:

2 pages of introduction (by the editor).
2 pages Turgenieff (translated by the editor).
1 page Larsen. (My new friend and fellow protagonist).
3 pages Daudet (translated by the editor).
3 pages aphorisms (by the editor).
1 page anecdotes, editorial remarks, etc.

Altogether twelve pages at a price of only one halfpenny per number. Amongst the aphorisms there is a short review of Zola's book, *L'Assommoir*, which had been translated into Danish at the time and was generally considered to be an immoral work. "Zola is by no means immoral," I said, "there is not a single place in the book in which vice is made attractive; on the contrary, he arouses everywhere our deepest horror of it. This book will never entice anyone into the arms of vice. It stands before us like an antique statue, its lines severe, its nudity chaste."

I do not know whether my paper (which had no other

title than " Dynamite " !) was read by the masters at the school. It appeared only two or three times. As a matter of fact, I made no secret of my opinions and frequently turned my exercises in composition into essays on religious, political or social problems. " I can not give any marks for this composition," our Danish master said one day, " it is an attempt at a personal system of philosophy !"

This was the goal which I was increasingly conscious of striving to reach. I still folded my hands sometimes— " From the depths I cry unto Thee, O Lord !" I cried once, with the same, continual feeling of misery, but orthodoxy had long since been diluted into thoughts like these : God the Father is the ideal, floating in the regions of eternity, whose power penetrates the world and creates it as the divine Word, revealed with increasing clearness in man, and completely so in Christ. Christ is the principle of the continual, progressive effort after increasing harmony with the Holy Spirit, the mind of the world, *Shekhina* or *Nemesis*, revealed in the sacred beauty of Nature. (January 27. *Shekhina* is the Talmud's expression for the Holy Spirit —*Nemesis* is derived from Goldschmidt's teaching about the guiding and legislating power in existence : Hathor-Nemt.)

Such formulæ as these I constructed for myself about twice a month, and each time I thought I had reached definite clearness. Until new reading, or new reflections a few days after showed me that the philosopher's stone was not so easy to find after all. Yet undaunted I went on digging for the continually sinking treasure, I was crushed under the weight of the old oppressive thought : " This is life, and if you fail in it, there is no other life to make up for it."—" This is life, spread out before me like something cold, something big, contemptuously looking on at an individual human being and his wriggling about on the earth, that grain of dust

among myriads—one is entirely at God's mercy." Still the thought-digging goes on, while at the same time matriculation is being prepared for. The months pass by—the sparrows are twittering about spring on the roofs—down in the yard women are wrangling from one open kitchen-window to the other—now and then a hurdy-gurdy plays a trailing tune in a yard further away, while beneath the roof the self-constituted philosopher struggles with the thoughts of all the ages, the symbols of all the nations, with the Bible and Byron, Turgenieff and Goethe. Until one day a name strikes him and becomes decisive: *Prometheus*! The saviour who is a rebel, a Christ who suffers, not *for* God, but *against* Him. This was Goethe's ideal: Here I sit, forming man in my own image, a race which shall be like me, to love, to suffer, to have no thought for thee, but for me. This was Shelley's ideal in *Prometheus Unbound*:

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs, darker than death or night;
> To defy power which seems omnipotent;
> To love and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
> This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free
> This alone is Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.

Prometheus, the rebel—Faust, the seeker after happiness, these two now merge into one great ideal; the student in the shoemaker's garret feels that he is of their race and kin. "Ardent, sacred will in me," he apostrophises himself in the diary, "Thou, that constrainest me with irresistible power—thou that dost not suffer me to tear away the veil hiding thy inscrutable being, but unseen and unknown leadest and guidest all my steps! Thou who, when the power of exterior circumstances

does not hinder and disfigure thee, art holy and good! Thou that impellest me to wisdom, to knowledge, to the beauty in poetry and art! Thou that plungest me into the depths of the feeling for Nature—praised be thou—full of joy and of suffering I advance beneath thy wings!" (February 20th, 1884).

I felt that with this standpoint I had reached a new religion. "Prometheus," I continued, makes himself equal with the gods, the powers, the masters. The latter wish to raise the world by the forces of their own laws; he, on the contrary, wishes to storm Heaven and drag it down to earth in the form of art, poetry, science —the kingdom of God." (March 2nd). As in ancient agnosticism, Prometheus becomes the principle of Good, he who bestows upon mankind all that a jealous God (the Theos ftoneros of Herodotus) would deny them: Lucifer!

The road is clear now for liberty to think, for free thought. "No, no, my thought," it says (the diary), "no barriers shall hinder thee, thou art divine, for the god himself is with thee at all times, in blissful joy, in restless peace! Throw thyself into the tempestuous waves, fight and seek and suffer in the most terrible storms without losing courage. Only onward, onward, through all that is human, all that is natural, all that is divine! Thou, my immortal soul, shalt be free of all bonds; yield thyself freely to every mood, in peace and joy as in pain and the deepest despair. Always, always, (thus spoke the god in me) thou art noble and good, for always thou strivest after the eternal, and therefore I will lay no fetters upon thee, oh, my soul!" (March 9th).

This is Goethe's "letting oneself go," or as the diary has it, with a quotation from *Werther*: "Ah, the others are free to go their own ways, if only they will let me go mine." Or, in my own words, "I cannot do otherwise—like a ship on the waves I am driven hither and

thither by the breath of every mood in my soul, by every movement, every power of my spirit. Yet I am not afraid, for in the midst of it all I possess the stingingly happy feeling of the ideal, *that God is on board with me*, and therefore I am proud of my heart" (March 14th).

On the clear nights of spring the starry heavens shone above the old roofs and chimneys, and the points and pinnacles of the gables, and the same stars also shed their light here. "Oh, thou dark vault of heaven with all thy radiant stars—my heart trembles with a pain that is mingled with joy—the All-God of whom are born both the Olympian gods above me and the Prometheus within me, speaks to me with his keen and gentle voice. And yet I do not understand, not even why I feel this strange and painful peace. Nothing, literally nothing, have I the power to understand, and yet I believe that I have advanced further than the others in knowledge. All this within me and about me seems to me to be like an enormous sphinx, gazing at me with great, black, mysterious eyes" (March 15th, midnight). This feeling of the incomprehensibility of all existence, and of the self as the fulcrum of Archimedes, grows from day to day. "God, providence, the ideal, *Daimonion*, is all merged to my feeble glance into a blissful, discordant harmony and I understand only one thing, that the god has entered into my heart, filling me with a melancholy joy, with a quiet pain, and giving me the right outlook upon the true worth of all that is earthly in relation to the eternal, of which my soul has a presentiment."

It is like being possessed by the very spirit of Nature. And it increases with the advancing spring. One morning in May, when the youth was sitting on a bench in the Oersted Park, it inspired him to this rhapsody: "The sky is bright with silvery vapours, its wide dome extends above golden-green lawns, luscious with the sap of May; above newly-opened leaves, softly swayed by warm breezes, and casting light shadows that chase

each other in patterns on the carpet of grass, which covers the earth like silk enfolding the swelling bosom of a woman. The trees on the lawn are like huge bouquets which have floated down upon the ever young bosom of the earth, fragrant with the perfumes of spring ; a snow of blossoms falls softly from them. The birds, almost forgetting to sing in this overwhelming, quivering joy of Nature, flutter from twig to twig, sunk in an ocean of rapture, while heaven and earth and sea and all the innumerable creatures of the earth are absorbed in the waters of a painfully sweet, divine current of life."

But Nature was not always in a festive mood, not even in spring, and one could not spend all one's time in the Oersted Park. Only two days after that Nature ecstasy the diary records : " Five o'clock in the afternoon. It is already beginning to grow dusk. The sky is grey and lowering. The ugly and dingy roofs shut out my view ; their crumbling edges are drearily outlined against the melancholy half-light of the sky. In the opposite house, which stares at me through small, grimy window-panes only a few feet away, they are busy cleaning ; they are quarrelling excitedly as to what can have become of the old floor-cloth which was in the pail this morning. Now and then a steamer hoots—one hoot after another, untiringly. The air, which is raw and cold, stirs the thin, drab curtain at my window, and brings with it the monotonous chirp of a poor, captive bird in the basement, always the same two or three monotonous notes. Now it has quite stopped, and the heavy pall of the sky lowers itself closer and closer to the earth. Yet still I hear the unwearying noise of labour from the big ant-hill of the city, where everyone is complacently conscious of the importance and value of his efforts to perform his duties. Still the infinite eye of heaven gazes immovably ; not a drop of rain falls to deliver the waiting air from its oppression.

Like every other immeasurable pain, this also lacks the power of expression, also lacks tears."

There is something of both Turgenieff and Lenau in this mood—it is not without reason that the diary immediately after contains the closing line of *Stimme des Regens*: *Die ganze Welt ist zum Verzweifeln traurig*. But the young pantheist is genuine enough, when he already sees the reverse of the medal: dependence on the power to which he has committed himself.

Yet even when the sky is clear, it does not follow that the mind is happy. In the light spring evenings the student that-is-to-be takes lonely walks along the banks of waters which are not those of the Sound at Svendborg, but which resemble them enough to awaken memories. And he writes in his diary:

> " The evening is so still,
> the sky is light, but grey
> Veiled in clouds that are soft and light,
> only in the west is there a last ray of the sun.
> The tall grass scarcely stirs
> the dark water is motionless and bright
> with clear pictures mirrored in its depths.
> Hark, how the young girls play,
> they scream and shout
> exulting in their abounding joy.
> Alas, for me it is
> as though dear and loved voices are calling
> my name again and again,
> and my heart swells as though it would break—
> But across the water the voices die away,
> across the distant, gleaming waters,
> alone and forsaken I sit here in the night,
> my heart is so still, so still,
> the deep ocean, the deep heart,
> Death floats above its waters,
> never, never will there be light,

for with piercing horror I have ever the one thought,
Ah, God, when all is over for ever !"

Thus the joy of life alternates with world-woe. Until they meet one morning and merge into one, and existence is accepted as it is and never otherwise than it is. It is the morning of May 23rd, beside the city moat, beneath the old earth walls, (now the site of the Royal Society) :

" It is morning. Everything is so wonderfully quiet. The water is spread out before me like a huge sheet of glass. A scarcely perceptible pearly ripple causes a trembling in the reflections of the sunlit trees, the white houses and the small, brown sheds. The tall, overhanging trees form a network of leaves like lace against the sky in which there is still the deep blue of the night.

" Over my head a great chestnut droops its delicate clusters of leaves, forming a canopy in which is sprinkled a pattern of sun-glints. The birds twitter from branch to branch, screaming, flapping their wings, they chase each other, hide in the foliage, dart out again, flitter out across the water, come back again and drop to the ground, where they suddenly sit quite sedately preening their feathers.

" On the other side of the water there is constant traffic. Now it is a peasant's cart, going to town, now a drift of cows come along the road. People who have been spending the night in the open wake up and bestir themselves. There a horseman comes cantering along—then comes a cart with a load of lime. Workmen, seamstresses pass by. All hurry along, contentedly, pleased with the fragrant morning. ' But,' I say softly to myself, ' what is the object of all this fresh, happy rejoicing in Nature ? Of this unwearying, energetic eagerness to work ?' With this question I gaze deep into the radiant eyes of the dewy morning.

" Then the trees softly rustled their divine heads, and

I heard a voice which sounded like a half-smothered sobbing, whispering: 'All that is alive lives only to nourish itself and nourishes itself only in order to live. Through all eternity these two alternate. But whether there is any object in it, whether anything is gained by it, is not known either to you or me or any other living creature!' "

This was ultimate knowledge—this was the philosopher's stone. Hugging it to my heart like a treasure, I passed out of school and into life.

# *THE RED STAR*

"*Night has but one red star.*"
SWINBURNE.

## I

THE autumn term began, and I tried to solve the insoluble problem which confronts a young student of small means, that of having to obtain his dinner at the table of kind people, while at the same time I tried to realise my programme of life. Through the influence of friends two or three houses had been found for me where I could dine—one at Christianshavn, and therefore quite near—the other two unfortunately at the extreme end of Oesterbro.

Never, I believe, has charity devised a greater failure than this place at the family table for a poor student. I had to walk the long way from Christianshavn on muddy, foggy autumn evenings, on rainy, slushy winter nights. This, too, in my thin summer overcoat, which was also to serve for winter use, and most of the time there were holes in my boots. I arrived in mud-spattered trousers and in wet, dirty boots, stepped on to the carpet in a warm and brightly-lit room, in which I found myself amongst pictures, clocks and mirrors which reflected my own detested features. I was received by a dignified, kind, middle-aged hostess with a small, white frilled cap on her beautiful silver-grey hair, and by pretty young girls who came forward and shook hands, but soon after started giggling and chattering with a young brother or cousin (and of course they were giggling at

me !). There was a scent of hyacinths in the room, a palm on the piano, a shining white cloth on the table beneath the hanging-lamp, and all the comfortable, intimate chatting of a well-to-do home. I was admitted into the atmosphere of social and economic security, sat shyly on the extreme edge of a velvet-covered arm chair in the sitting-room, sat awkwardly at the dinner-table and (of course !) ate with my knife. And when I found myself out in the road again, in the thin coat which had not had time to get dry, and again felt the dampness of the streaming pavement drenching the soles of my boots—well, then I understood something of what it means to be amongst " the step-children of society," and was filled with the spirit of opposition, not only on my own account, but also on that of others.

As a matter of fact, I had become a student in the days of the great opposition. Henrik Ibsen was launching one torpedo after another at the ark of society ; Georg Brandes had not yet become an aristocratic superman ; in Sweden Strindberg had been accused of blasphemy. In my diary I find recorded the words with which the Swedish author replied to the ovation made to him at the railway station in Stockholm on October 21st, 1884 : " I am glad to see that we can now get some fresh air into our lungs ; when I left Sweden it was hardly possible to breathe." That was the feeling that I had, too, when I had to sit at Conservative dinner tables and listen to attacks on everything that I admired and looked up to, everything that was new and fresh and courageous, everything that had thenceforward made Strindberg my hero. First *The Red Room*, then *Sleepwalking Nights on Waking Days* and *Utopias in Reality* became my gospels.

The first practical result of my radicalism was that I attended the lectures on philosophy given by Höffding. [1]

[1]Höffding (b. 1843), during a course of study in Paris came under the influence of Comte's Positivism, Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism and Spencer's doctrine of Evolution. Became doctor of philosophy in 1870 and during the ten years until 1880 lectured at the University of Copenhagen on

This choice separated me from my fellow dynamitard, Larsen, who had hitherto shared my views. He was a disciple of Kroman,[1] who was considered to be more conservative and whose lectures were attended particularly by theologians, for, notwithstanding his nose, his name and his freethinking ideas, Larsen had begun to study theology! We still saw a good deal of each other, however, and in his small room, which overlooked the gardens of the municipal hospital, we spent long afternoons in endless talks, disputes and quarrels. He was my only associate . . . I steadily attended lectures, my special study being Germanic philology. The rest of the time I stayed at home, read a great deal and wrote verses.

Yes, how I wrote! Incessantly, day after day, week after week, month after month. My diary of that autumn is full of verses, verses, verses. In October on two dates, three verses each time; in November, seventeen altogether, spread over eight different dates; in December the number rises to thirty-eight, besides a long poem entitled "Titan Voices." Then I went home for Christmas. What was there, then, in all this rhyming? All these lyrics, the metrical form of which I stole from Heine or Aarestrup,[2] Lenau or Thor Lange?[3]

philosophy in Germany since Hegel and contemporary English philosophy. Became professor of philosophy at the University of Copenhagen in 1883. May be characterised as a Positivist philosopher. Exercised great influence on the young generation of Denmark, not only through his lectures, writings and conversations, but also through his personality and mode of life. Now living in retirement at the "residence of honour" granted by the Carlsberg Fund for the use of men of science, letters, etc., on their retirement from active work.

[1]Kroman (b. 1846—d. 1925). Became professor of philosophy in 1884. Chief work: *Our Knowledge of Nature*, a theory of knowledge which distinguishes between *formal* sciences (Logic, Mathematics, Mechanics) and *real* sciences (natural and spiritual sciences). A follower of Lotze in his psychological theories; of Kant in his ethics.

[2]See footnote p. 52, 1.

[3]Thor Lange was born in 1851 and died in 1915. In about 1877 he was called upon by the Russian government to teach in a grammar school in

First and above all they were poems of revolt. *Titan Voices* and *Titan Blood* sufficiently indicate their contents. When I said Titan I meant the same by that term as that which was later to be called "Bohemian" and still later "superman"—he who dictates his own laws —he who will not be content to become what Kierkegaard calls "a tiny little Peter Average," a screw in the great machinery of life. At that time Kroman had drawn attention to the deep connection between new Radicalism and old Romanticism—maintaining that in both movements the main nerve is the revolt of self against existing moral standards, that of the individual against society, of the one against the many, of poetry against philistinism, of the heart against the law. I can confirm Kroman's thesis from my own experience, for I have myself at one and the same time been inspired by both revolts.

The "Titan" student contemplates the prospect before him with thorough discontent; of inferior station and lacking means, what can he expect from life and society? The drudgery of teaching, of wearing out his coat-sleeves on an office desk, of getting dusty fingers in a library! Bitterly he pictures his future:

> When on wakeful nights
> I look down the streets of life
> I see everywhere the dust of books
> and I rummage in it till

Moscow, where he settled, later becoming Danish consul there. He married a niece of Pobjedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod. He wrote poetry of a remarkable quality, published in a collection under the title of *Through Coloured Glass* (1891); *In Danish colours* (1897); *Distant Melodies* (1902); *Lute Strings* (1906). His talent for lyrical description is shown in *A Month in the East*, *Sketches and Fantasies*, *Wesna*, *Descriptions and Tendencies of Russian Literature*, 1886. It was due to him that Denmark became acquainted with contemporary Russian literature. He also translated *The Golden Legend* by Longfellow into Danish.

I sneeze, and a crowd about me,
my fellow-comrades in this toil,
turn round upon me
and say, " God bless you !" [1]

But the others are happy in their narrow world. Like the dry *famulus* of Doctor Faust, they wish for nothing better. It is only the poet who sees that

Outside the little window
the light leaves whisper softly ;
across the skies the clouds are scudding,
the swallows speeding after them.

In the lime-tree a nightingale
warbles, so that my withered heart
in anguish and in longing swells
and the pallid flowers fall.

The air is fragrant, full of music,
Over the meadows the moon is dreaming
and the white mists are dancing . . . .

Ah ! but I alone have seen it,
and again I bend my back
like my fellow-workers,
diligent and learned men.

In his poetry this youth always looked for happiness *outside* himself. Outside, like " her " voice, which drew him away from lessons—outside—and *far away*—like the moon-white nights in summer. Outside, and far away, and *then*—never here, and near and now. Most of the poems of the eighteen-year old romantic were therefore full of " far away " and " then." They were never printed, nor did most of them deserve it.

[1] In Denmark this is still a custom when anyone sneezes. It is said to owe its origin to the time of the great plague, sneezing being one of the first symptoms of the dreaded disease.—TR.

## II

I returned to Copenhagen and again attended the University lectures, still feeling a stranger amongst my fellow-students. I became a member of the Students' Association, but only for the sake of the reading-room. There I spent long, grey winter afternoons sunk in the depths of one of the worn sofas, and deeply absorbed in new books, Garborg's[1] *Peasant Students*, Amalia Skram's[2] *Constance Ring*, the *Mournful Melodies*, and *Hopeless Generations* of Herman Bang, Esmann's *Old Debts*, Gejerstam's[3] *Poor Folk* and *Erik Grane*, Madame Edgren's[4] *At War with Society*, all the melancholy, despairing and rebellious literature of the period.

[1]Garborg (Arne), b. 1851—d. 1924. One of the greatest Norwegian poets and writers of the present age. He was the son of a pietist peasant, and after being master of an ambulatory school he completed his studies in Christiania. In his first books, *Peasant Students* (1883) and *Weary Men* (1891) he relates his own experiences with realism and bitterness. In *Peace* he returns to the surroundings of his childhood and describes a crisis of mystic piety in a peasant. In this case also he wrote from personal experience, and his writings are inspired by a mystic Christianity without dogmas, and by the love of mankind, pity, sweetness and melancholy, this being shown especially in his poems—*Haugtussa* (1895) and *In Helheim* (1901).

[2]Skram (Amalia),b. 1847—d. 1903. One of the most prominent writers of the naturalist school in Norway. Her novel, *Constance Ring* (1885) was among the first attempts made to describe life in its brutality and was contemporaneous with the *Bohemia of Christiania* by Hans Jæger, appearing a year after the *Weary Men* of Arne Garborg. The novels, *Hellemyr Folk*, the history of a family in several volumes and *Betrayed* show a penetrating psychology.

[3]Gejerstam (Gustav of) b. 1858—d. 1909. One of the foremost naturalist writers in Sweden. In *Grey and Cold* he already showed a vivid talent for observation, as also in *Poor Folk*, which in addition gives evidence of a profound sympathy with the sufferings of the people. This sympathy led him, later, to making sociological studies. The result of these was the *Criminal*, in which he analyses the impulses urging a human being to crime; besides this, the book also contains remarkable descriptions of the country, though they are tinged with pessimism. The novel, *Erik Grane*, which describes life in the University town of Upsala, and is presented like a human document, met with great success. Another of his best known books is *The Head of Medusa*, portraying an intelligent person paralysed by the sudden thought that life has no meaning.

[4]Leffler Edgren (Anna Charlotta Gustava), b. 1849—d. 1892, was a

Meanwhile I went on attending lectures and I passed my examination with honours. I listened attentively to Höffding's summing up of his year's course, and agreed cordially with his conclusions on the two main points in it: "Work for the ideal that you have set before you. Always be true to your convictions." Exactly what I wished to do! But there were other words from the master's lips to which I could not give my allegiance. "Höffding says," (the diary records) "that it ought not to matter even though our whole life be of no use, since it has a value in itself, is an end in itself. But then, does not the whole of life in that case become futile buffoonery, a great deal of fuss for nothing, and all our efforts only like the empty importance of ants trying to carry a straw from one place to another? Can the thought of the Ice Age, which brutally destroys the whole of historical development, be thrown on the scrap heap? And individual life is supposed to end with "*those sodas and magnesias which form that bitter draught, the human species*" (May 26th, 1885).

"Close your Byron and open your Goethe," Carlyle cries somewhere to youth. In that year of philosophy at the University I did exactly the opposite. Goethe's "Faust," with its ideal of "eternal effort" no longer told me anything, and, as a matter of fact, it is perhaps the emptiest ideal of all, and only acceptable when one does not think it out to its logical conclusions. For never-ending effort presupposes everlasting discontent,

sister of the Swedish mathematician Leffler. In 1872 she married Judge G. E. Edgren, was divorced from him in 1889, and married the Duke of Cajanello, an Italian mathematician. She began her literary career with a collection of stories, *By Chance* (1869); and later wrote the following plays, which were publicly performed: *The Actress* (1873); *Under the Rule* (1876); *The Assistant Pastor* (1878); *The Gnome* (1880); *True Women* (1883); *The Rescuing Angel* (1883). Other works are *Parallels*, *How one does Good*, in five volumes; *The Struggle for Happiness*, and *Scenes from Life* (1882-1890). Madame Edgren was the friend of the mathematician, Sonja Kovalevski, whose biography she wrote. She was a very romantic woman, and, during the first part of her life, an ardent champion of feminism.

everlasting aspiration, longing and desire, and everlasting suffering. And I knew enough of aspiration and longing not to wish them to last for ever, but on the contrary to wish them to be satisfied. I hungered and demanded to be filled; I thirsted and wanted to drink, long, deep draughts from a cool and refreshing spring, or a strong and intoxicating wine—water or wine, refreshment or intoxication, anything but this everlasting emptiness to which one awoke every morning and which no philosophy could fill. I closed my *Faust*; I opened my *Don Juan*, and the symbol of my longing now was no longer the erring maiden in the dim, incense-laden light of the Cathedral, but the free child of Nature, Haidée on the shores of Greece, "*a wild and breaker-beaten shore*," as it is called in the immortal second Canto of the English poet's wild, breaker-booming verses.

A stranger and one feeling himself remote from his surroundings, I was at home only in the woods and in the solitudes of the forest. Like all enemies of society I, too, became an enemy of mankind and of civilisation. "The maternal bosom of Nature" is not an empty expression—Nature *is* a mother who does not chastise and preach severe sermons, but who, forgetting and forgiving everything, rocks the weary, the sorrowful, the sinful child on her warm, generous breast, murmuring, "My poor, poor boy!"

The official summer holidays had not yet begun, but I took them myself. Spring had made her entry into Copenhagen and the youth of eighteen felt her power. The power of spring—and of Aphrodite. "All-mighty art thou, Aphrodite, all-mighty and detestable! But the others do not perceive it, they worship thee by the side of their Christ, and do not see the frown on His pale brow, and that the proud lips, which have never touched the lips of any woman but His Mother, are curled in contempt." Leaving the Copenhagen parks with the embracing couples on the benches and the passionate

sobbing of the nightingale on dusky April nights, I went out in the lingering daylight of May evenings to the woods, further and further away, at last, one day in June, going as far as Gurre.[1]

June 26th. At Gurre Lake. Whispering reeds, rustling leaves. A fish leaps from the water. Incessant, solitary twittering. There is a knocking on the other side of the blue, gliding water. On the opposite shore tall trees and bright surfaces of grass. Roofs among the foliage—behind them a row of dome-shaped trees. Furthest away broad, smooth walls of forest, as remote as one's longings. All in a sunny haze. Above it white, thin clouds and a blue, bright sky.

Along the shores of the lake—no footpath. Luscious, tall grass. A hot stillness, only a distant cry of a bird. Flying shadows. Spicy, sun-warmed scent. Landwards, a wood of slender tree-trunks, swaying and trembling, overflowed by waving shadows. Above: the sunlit young foliage. Below: the tall stems of the grassland in which there are flashes of golden potentilla and ranunculus. Insects are humming, a bird is twittering far away in the depths of the wood, there is a soft

[1]Gurre.—A lake situated at a distance of about two hours by rail from Copenhagen in a northerly direction, and near the ruins of a mediæval castle. Valdemar the Great (b. 1131—d. 1187), (who after long and arduous wars achieved the unity of Denmark, and who was aided by the wise counsels of Bishop Absalon) lived here. He had a mistress named Tove, who is described in Danish folk-songs as beautiful, good and charming, but the King was compelled to marry Sophie, the daughter of his enemy, Knud Magnussen. According to one of the two folk-songs relating this story, the Queen had her husband's mistress suffocated in a steam bath. There is also a tradition that Valdemar said one day, "God may keep His heaven, if He will leave me Gurre." Because of these words he is said to have been condemned to haunt for ever the forests of Gurre, and on stormy autumn nights the baying of his hounds was heard by mediæval imagination in the howling of the wind in the forest, while the hounds were seen in the racing clouds.

Gurre is a word of two syllables. The u is pronounced like u in "push" and the e is slightly accented, like all final e's in Danish. Cf. Tove, which is pronounced To-ve, the "e" being like the French "e" in "le."—Tr.

and mournful sighing in the woods and the reeds. A gurgle from the water, the rumble of wheels far away.

A sandy, deserted shore with rippling waves and on the other side sunlit, lonely woods. The lonely, pathless woods, which are there now, as they were when Valdemar and Tové saw them—which will be there long after I have ceased to be.

3 p.m. Still at the lake. Blue, hurrying water. Whispering of the wind, swaying reeds. Red clouds on the horizon above the other coast. A shining gable of a house yonder. Blue dragonflies above the reeds. Splashing and sparkling of fish. Heavy, somnolent quiet. The garden of Persephone.

5 p.m. The woods grow sombre, the light paler, golden. It is cool, calm. Very soft whispering. Faint twittering. A shout far away.

5.45 p.m. Lying on the grass. The sweet damp scent of verdure, near me the rippling and gurgling of the water. The small, green islet in the middle of the lake, sunlit and solitary. So quiet, so remote, unsuspected.

It is growing cooler and cooler, more and more quiet. A sound from the water—knocking and shouting from the other side of the lake—all so clear and sharp in the keen air. The shadows lengthen, the light is golden, a thrush is singing clearly and sweetly in the high woods.

10 p.m. The lake is smooth and shining in one place, in another darkly shadowed or reddish golden. The sky fades away to a pure, pale shimmer of gold. A few silvery-blue stars in the greenish air. A velvety blue eastern sky and a bright golden moon.

In verdant Gurre there was peace. But when I had wandered a whole day in the solitude of the woods, the train relentlessly carried me back to Copenhagen, to the lovers on the old earth-walls and the cherry-tree walks, to the light and laughing flirtations at Langelinie. Thither I went in the evening, night after night,

weary and hopeless amongst all the happy and thoughtless youth of the city, and in the loneliness of my attic I could utter only one prayer, that of Swinburne to Persephone :

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be,
That no man lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somehow safe to sea.

## III

At the age of eighteen it is still a long way to the quiet garden of Persephone and endless repose in its fields of asphodel. It was in that year that Adda Ravnkilde committed suicide. She was a talented young authoress, a volume of whose stories was published posthumously, with a preface by no less a sponsor than Georg Brandes. But she had at least left something behind by which to be remembered before she went into the great darkness. I had achieved nothing yet, nothing whatever.

And so I remained alive. I went on studying as well as I could—in the autumn of 1885 I began learning Sanskrit—while at the same time continuing my " recreative reading "—a list of books from that period contains names so desperately far apart as Bettina, Shelley, Goncourt, Turgenieff, Arthur Fitger, Coleridge, Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris. At the same time I was ploughing my way through Taine's *De l'Intelligence*, Renan's *Origines du Christianisme*, Strauss : *Der alte und der neue Glaube*, Darwin, too, of course, in a translation by J. P. Jacobsen.[1] " How do you get time

[1] Jacobsen (Jens Peter) was born in Jutland in 1847 and died in 1885. Chief of the Danish writers of the second half of the nineteenth century.

to read all that?" a fellow-student asked me one day when I was talking about my omnivorous reading. Nor can it be denied that it entirely lacked any plan. I allowed myself to be led by my *daemon* and by my oppressed state of mind, which demanded forgetfulness. At Svendborg they were quite unaware of the high-handed way in which I was employing my time. Besides, I had taken my intermediate degree in philosophy with honours and had been able to inform my anxious mother and my questioning uncle that "in all essentials I had the same philosophical point of view as the lecturer, Mr. Höffding." With this the new "Erasmus Montanus[1] obtained his Imprimatur and his free-thinking was given the official stamp.

Meanwhile my studies were not regulated by any plan, any more than my life. I had surrendered myself to Nature and now she dominated me; I was at the mercy of great forces. In vain did I long for peace in the cool arms of Persephone; another goddess was compelling me to my knees. Swinburne too, has sung of

Made special studies of natural history, chiefly of botany and translated Darwin's works. His first novel *Mogens* was published in 1872 and was followed in 1875 by *A Shot in the Mist* which contains his conception of Nature. It shows the influence of Sainte Beuve, of Flaubert, of Merimée and of Brandes, who encouraged him to give to Danish literature that which was still unknown to it, the prose poem. His historical novel. Marie Grubbe (1876) is wholly modern in the psychology of its characters and in the naturalism of its descriptions, which, though they may not be said to present a bygone period based on serious study, are not lacking in accuracy. The style is characteristic, very elaborate, and as required by the subject, slightly archaic. The hero of Jacobsen's other major novel, Niels Lyhne, is a romantic atheist. The writer's prose reaches perfection in this melancholy work: it is at the same time rhythmic and varied in colour. Other works by Jacobsen are *Fru Fönss*, *The Plague of Bergamo*, *There ought to have been Roses*. *Marie Grubbe* has been translated into French. Jacobsen has been said to have much in common with George Meredith.

[1]Hero of one of the comedies of Holberg, the Danish Molière. He is a student and the son of a peasant, who is puffed up with pride by his newly-acquired knowledge. The play can be read in a French translaton in the volume devoted to Holberg of *One Hundred Foreign Masterpieces* (*Renaissance du Livre*).

her—he calls her "O mystic and sombre Dolores, our Lady of Pain" . . . .

The adversaries whom a young freethinker had to face in those days were fond of maintaining that freethought necessarily led to what is usually called immorality, that is, transgression of the sixth commandment. We emphatically denied this and pointed out J.P. Jacobsen as one who in practice had proved the contrary and whose life, on a foundation of pure atheism, was irreproachable, regarded also from the standpoint of Christian morality. But when this principle had been established it cannot be denied that we recovered our spirits and asked, "But, by the way, why is so-called immorality immoral?"

Human ethics gave no answer. The problem was left unsolved—and literature made it a subject of discussion together with all the other problems. At the new year in 1886 I had left the small circle of Liberals in the Students' Association and become a member of the recently founded Students' Society.[1] Here I was in the storm centre of the discussion of problems. How many an afternoon, which ought to have been devoted to the University, was not wasted in the low-ceiled, democratically plain rooms of the "Society" in endless discussions and revolutionary forecasts of the future!

The problem of problems was the question of sex. It occurs as No. 3 on the list of "social problems" which I had made at the time and which gives an idea of what engaged the minds of young radicals forty years ago:

1. The emancipation of women.
2. Education of both sexes in common. Teaching of physiology, gymnastics, handicrafts.
3. Sex relations.

[1] A group which had left the Student's Association to form an opposition to the conservative government then in power.

4. Superculture. Nervousness. Over-working of the middle classes.
5. Prostitution.
6. Illegitimate children.
7. Total abstinence.
8. Social morals and the liberty of art.
9. Instruction for working men.
10. Free legal advice.
11. Militia.
12. Adult suffrage from the age of 22. Representation of minorities.
13. Progressive taxation.
14. Co-operation. Trades Unions and Consumers' Associations.
15. Separation of Church and State. Official Atheism.

All these questions were of course more or less made the subject of debate in the Society's rooms, but it cannot be denied that No. 3 was discussed with more heat than the others. Nor is this any wonder: of late years it has also been necessary to discuss it from a Christian point of view. It is by no means an easy matter for a young man continually to repress one of the most powerful appetites in Nature. He must have strong motives if he is to persevere in it year after year. And we young freethinkers could not find these motives. Höffding's handbooks on morals did not provide them. When the great strife over morality broke out between Björnson and Brandes,[1] most of us were on the side of the latter. In any case we could not be scandalised at the famous, oft quoted words about the "worthless prejudice" to which young girls of the better classes sacrificed themselves in joyless celibacy. We also found

[1] On the question of *A Gauntlet*, a play published and performed in 1883, in which Björnson had maintained that the moral demands made on young girls should equally be made on young men.

celibacy joyless and wished for nothing better than the destruction of that prejudice.

There was nothing remarkable, nothing illogical, and granted the point of view, nothing immoral in this. If the human moralist is right, if morals are really autonomous, then each one is free to do with himself as he pleases. That others disapprove of his conduct does not prove that it is wrong. Not even a disapproval expressed by entire humanity would be any proof against it, for the right of the individual to act autonomously can never be abolished. Modern ethics have no sanction and their last word will therefore necessarily be, as Nietzsche has rightly said, and no professor can make unsaid, that "nothing is true and everything is permitted."

A couple of years were still to pass before Nietzsche became known to Denmark (and through Denmark to the world). But Strindberg had already presaged an approaching "transmutation of values"; a Russian nihilist, Tschernyschewski, had struck the same note in his novel, *Que faire?* which was much read by young radicals of the day.

To tell the truth, the Students' Society was not altogether inspired by this spirit of anarchy. The general moral level was that of the "morals of happiness," "the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number." Officially we adhered to Höffding's ethics.

But, as everywhere else, the exoteric doctrine differed from the esoteric; the kernel was one thing, the shell another. Involuntarily I went whither the words seemed the most sincere, where people said what they meant, and where one did not shrink from any thought or expression, if only the truth could be brought to light, naked and bleeding like a newborn infant. I sat down at the Socratic table, at first as a listener, afterwards contributing my share as a speaker. Here my shyness disappeared altogether, as did also my feeling of being a stranger, as much as it could disappear at all, for here

I felt that I was amongst my own kin. We were all of the tribe of Cain.

All over the world it looked as though the victory were to be ours. With the deep-set eyes under the furrowed brow, and the famous raven's wings above it, our great, admired and idolised leader looked out from his desk upon Europe. "Watchman, what of the night?" the English poet had asked in *Songs before Sunrise*. Home again from his travels in Europe, Georg Brandes could report that the dawn was near, and that a galaxy of brilliant stars of the morning were heralding the new day: Victor Hugo and Swinburne, Carducci and Paul Heyse and Gottfried Keller, Zola and Flaubert, Taine and Renan, Darwin, Spencer and Mill; Turgenieff, Strindberg, Ibsen, Björnson and Drachmann; and was he not amongst them too, he, Lucifer, the red star of the dawn?

There was really a joy of assault in our souls. We believed that all riddles were now to be solved, all fetters to be struck off. We hoped for the end of Christianity, for the coming of the social republic, the resurrection of the pagan body and the happiness, attained at last, of a liberated humanity.

This was our faith, and Hans Jæger's[1] *The Bohemia of Christiania* was our Bible.

For those who have not had the experience of the coming of that book it is difficult to imagine the effect that it produced. In stronger words than even those of Strindberg's *Red Room* and Garborg's novels it stated everything, described everything, even to the

[1]Jæger (Hans), b. 1854—d. 1910. A Norwegian writer who treated the most daring subjects in the most naturalistic manner. His *Bohemia of Christiania* was published in 1885 and was denounced in the courts, the author receiving a penalty of sixty days imprisonment in Norway and fifty days in Sweden. He blamed Society for the vices which he described with complaisance and preached anarchy. To the younger generation he appeared in the rôle of reformer. He greatly influenced contemporary writers, some of whom exceeded him in immorality. Knut Hamsun was one of those who came under his influence.

deepest degradation. Such were our aspirations, our desires, our sufferings—and what was the remedy, what did Society offer us to quench our thirst in the flames? The bought woman or the immoral relationship. First the harlot, then the church wedding—that was the conservative solution of the problem of sex.

Against this solution the Norwegian writer rose in all his strong and deep man's longing for the love of a woman. In a book of a thousand pages he cursed the society that only allowed a choice between police-regulated degradation and life outside the pale of the law—between prostitution and Bohemia. Yet he did not find any solution either of the problem—not yet at least, he said. This "not yet" became the bridge which led from personal revolt to social revolution, from romanticism to socialism. In Hans Jæger's opinion, with which we young Danes agreed, the ideal relationship between the sexes was that of perfect freedom. A temporary alliance—we had no objection to its lasting for life—but free. In order to realise this freedom, however, the economic independence of both partners was necessary. In existing marriage the woman was still bought by the man, she looked upon him as "the bread-winner"; he looked upon her as his wedded mistress—in other words, marriage was another form of prostitution. For love between man and woman really to become what it ought to be it would have to be set free from marriage, and this could be achieved only if the capitalistic form of production were abolished, and men and women given an equal position as working citizens in the Socialist State. "And the children?" we were asked. "Will be brought up by the State," was the prompt answer. Thus it was not hate, but love, that drove us into Socialism.

In order to give a public manifestation of our adherence to Socialistic principles the small circle to which I belonged decided to join in the working men's festival

procession on the anniversary of the day when Denmark obtained her Constitution.

Thus it was that we formed part of the procession on that bright afternoon of the 5th of June, 1886, our gaze fixed upon the red banner fluttering in the summer breeze. We were only few in numbers, a mere couple of rows, but we wore our students' caps, and we wore them purposely; we wanted to bring them under the banner of revolt. As we swung into the old street leading into the centre of the city, we received the first "Bravo" from the thick wall of spectators—but also a shout from an old conservative who cried, "Shame! Danish students to walk under that red rag!" Proudly we marched on, the brass band in front playing the Socialist march, and now, what was that? It came like the flapping of a flag in the wind, *Allons, enfants de la patrie*—the Marseillaise!

The old, ever young, immortal Marseillaise! The Marseillaise, tearing asunder, overthrowing everything. The Marseillaise, the battle-song of the Revolution, its song of triumph, its *Te Deum*! The Marseillaise, to the ringing notes of which thousands and tens of thousands have stormed to the hero's death, and tens of thousands drawn their last breath under the sweep of its eagle's wings. The Marseillaise, the Marseillaise! I have only to hear the first notes of it and I feel myself growing pale, and the tears welling up, the irresistible tears—the Marseillaise, the Marseillaise—the tears are blinding me—I do not see where I am—the pale-green newly-opened leaves on the lime-trees are about me, overhead the red banners are stretched like sails in the wind; the June sun is shining, and beside me a strong man's voice is fervently singing:

*Aux armes, citoyens,*
*Formez vos bataillons,*
*Marchons, marchons, qu'un sang impur*
*Abreuve nos sillons.*

And so we celebrate on this day, this afternoon, this evening, this night, the fête of our youth, of our liberty. With the people, in the midst of the people, like the people. All barriers have been broken down, all bonds loosened, all chains snapped. We do not listen much to the speeches, keeping more to the outer borders of the fête, amongst the families sitting on the ground with their picnic baskets. There is a pleasant smell from the down-trodden juicy grass. Amongst the pretty young daughters of artisans, who have no objection to a chat with a newly joined academic comrade—in all the tents refreshments can be bought, and democratic beer is drunk at rough-hewn tables, where one sits amongst masons on a bench which is only a plank.

Then the evening in Tivoli[1]—crowds, friends and acquaintances of whom one catches a glimpse in the current, when the same current sweeps them away again. In the Bodega one suddenly find oneself in the midst of a circle drinking port wine around a barrel. Suddenly, too, one sees the fireworks in the company of a girl in a light summer frock, with one's arm round her waist, which does not seem to annoy her; she remains until her mother or someone else calls her from the surge of the passing crowd and she disappears as she came.

One passes on, again some friends turn up—another drink—Tivoli closes—one is out again in the brightly lit streets, crowded with people in summer attire on this summer night—a string of young girls approaches —one is surrounded, others too in the midst of them—there is shouting and laughing—a tavern in Vesterbro, a swarm of people both inside and out, all the tables engaged, a place at the corner of a table—a drink—a glass is upset—" On your dress ?" " Oh, but let us go !" " Where to ?" " Home to my place !"

[1]A pleasure garden centrally situated in Copenhagen, in which may be found all kinds of entertainments.

The next morning you stand outside the door of the house in which you live, you have forgotten the key of the door or lost it; you go in through the door of the next house, the door of which is always open, and climb the palings—and when at last you have slipped into your room, thankful not to have been seen, and feeling no shame over the experiences of the night—your glance falls on a little cardboard box standing on the table—a box wrapped in paper, clumsily tied with a piece of cotton by an unpractised hand; you recognise the writing, you guess what the little box contains, flowers from home. In the white dawn of a June morning the enemy of society, the Socialist, the Bohemian, opens the box and carefully removes the damp moss from the narcissi and auriculas. Tucked in at the side he finds a letter, which he reads, sitting at the open window:

Dear Brother,

I cannot endure it any longer, I have been and still am longing for you, for a walk with you, seeing you and hearing you speak. For I don't quite understand your letters, I don't know—perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that it is not my own "old man" who has written them. Now you will be cross, of course, and wonder whether I am writing to worry you, but I can't help it; you seem to me to have disappeared. Ah, well, I had better not speak of it, after all I shall never be able to explain so that you will understand.—Well, the woods are green now, and they did not seem to wait for the rain they needed to make the buds unfold, as the newspapers said. It always annoys me to read that stuff, year in, year out, so I was amused when the woods made haste before the rain came. But then it did come, with a storm after it, so that now the woods are almost dark, yet lovely, lovely. A fortnight ago to-morrow Bertha and I were at the Grass Eyots. The

beeches had just come into leaf the two last nights, I do not think I ever saw anything so beautiful, but then I say that every time—just pale green wherever you looked, and then the branches hang, you know, bent downwards a little, and they sway so very softly, oh, so softly, and the birds fly, oh, so quietly, as only birds in the Grass Eyots can fly ; and then the sunlight, an abundance everywhere, quantities of gleams, rays, then, suddenly, heaps of sunshine pouring down on an old tree-stump, only because the branches of a tree were blown aside. But out in the bog, the big marsh, you know, oh, how I wish you were there and could see all its glories—tree-stumps quite smothered in moss, meadowsweet, anemones, wild violets, dandelions and all those things that you can find in a bog. But here I am, filling the whole page without thinking ; that was not what I meant to do. Thank you for the cards and the letter, was pleased to get both. Enclosed with this is a box of flowers. Bertha and I were out at half-past five this morning to gather them at Kristiansminde. The lilies-of-the valley are from Bertha's garden, then there are apple-blossoms, wild ones, from the walk near the beach at Kristiansminde, and wild violets. Have you ever really looked at wild violets ? Look at these and then tell me whether they aren't much prettier than March violets. People have got it into their heads that violets, to be really pretty, must be " deep blue !" How stupid ! Then there is bennet and woodruff, and look carefully at a delicate white one, I don't know what it is called, but you can see for yourself. This is my spring greeting—I am longing for a letter from you. Do not misunderstand me and think you are obliged to write, I can wait a long time. Go for a very beautiful walk and write if you feel inclined, not otherwise.

My examination last week passed off to the satis-

faction of everyone concerned. Pastor Prip said he could not understand how I could teach so many children of different ages so well. I am just beginning to be really fond of my work and that is of course what helps me to get on. I believe too, that I have succeeded in making the children like most of the subjects, I think that is most important. I have been having holidays Thursday, Friday and Saturday and begin again on Monday.

I like your *Sleepless Nights* in *Nutiden* better than the first poem; the words are placed better. Have much more to write about, but am afraid I must stop.

Hosts of love from,
Your sister, S.

The letter was from the eldest of my sisters. Although two years younger than I, she had already begun to teach in a local school. Accompanied by her best friend, she had been out early on a cool, June morning to gather flowers and send me this greeting of spring. What had I to send her? Discontented, despairing verses, like those she had read of mine, and which ended in this edifying manner:

> The night's black grains of sand are running
> Soundlessly down through space,
> They have bolted all the doors,
> They have stopped all the paths,
> Every fruitless prayer for happiness
> Has long since grown mute in the soul,
> Slain and dead is every longing,
> Hope is a legend, darkened is the sun.

This was I—and that was my sister. This was Copenhagen—and that was Svendborg. These were the new thoughts—that was the old faith.

I turned the letter over; there was a little postscript, written in a childish hand, from the other of my sisters:

"The cross-flower with the grey, ugly leaves is a night-violet, it has no scent until after sunset. Sofie says I am to tell you this.

Much love from
Elisabeth.

At this moment we are in the wash-house packing the flowers.

Elisabeth.
14 years old.

## IV

Even if I had wanted to turn back it was too late now. There are steps which one cannot retrace.

The part which I had taken in the social democratic festival had not passed unnoticed and the patience of my conservative benefactors was worn out. Nothing was said to me, I was quietly allowed to go home for the summer holidays as usual. But then the bomb exploded in the form of a stern but calm letter to my parents. For a moment I felt as if the world was tumbling about my ears. I discovered that much more had been noticed than I suspected, that even my most secret thoughts seemed to be known. The want of industry in my studies, the aimless life, walks and discussions instead of lectures, dinners to which I had been invited, but from which I had stayed away; the purchase of "entertaining" books instead of those I needed,—*all* had been put down to my account. A long respite had been given me, in the hope that I might mend my ways, but instead of that I had gone further and further adrift. I had overdrawn my account now and they struck without mercy.

As I said, there was a moment when the ground seemed to give way under me. I was only a boy, not yet twenty, and my dear mother's grief-filled eyes were looking into mine, and her voice was saying so hope-

lessly, " We were so proud of you here ! We believed in you so much, we could never have dreamed that you would do anything wrong. It's all over now. I shall never have another happy day in my life !"

I looked at her, I saw her grief. This was *not* poetry, this was reality ! For a moment it seemed as though a golden haze were torn asunder—I saw that I was neither a Faust nor a Prometheus, but only what I had been called in the letter, a lazy rascal, who had been spending other people's money to no purpose, a quite ordinary wastrel-student who came home drunk in the morning. It was a scorching, smarting moment in which I stood in the midst of truth as in a fire and knew myself for nothing but the common egoist and foolish dreamer that I really was.

But egoism is only an old-fashioned name for the modern virtue of self-assertion, and it is a fine thing to be a dreamer. And so I did not weep the redeeming tears of repentance at my mother's knee. I escaped from the searchlight of truth in strong indignation at the tyrannical conduct and brutal intolerance of the spirit of reaction. I tried to break the sting of the complaints and accusations against me with half lies and whole ones. At last I proudly stood erect with my head up like a martyr ; I was now " at war with society " in good earnest !

The red star had led me outside the pale of society and a long way towards the abyss.

## *VEDUSKOGIN*

*I lost my way in the haunted wood*
*I could not find my way home.* " SPELLBOUND."

### I

VEDUSKOGIN[1]—the haunted wood, the wood you enter when you have stepped on wild grass, and from which you seldom find your way out again, the wood which is the home of the " huldre," the beautiful woman with the hindquarters of a cow (which you do not see, because you are spellbound by the sparkling eyes, the dazzling smile, the white arms and the white breast). The wood which is the home of the maiden of the mist; she floats before you over the meadows in the mists of a summer night and you follow her out to the heaving ground of the bog, you step into it, never to come back to the land of humankind. The wood in which lives the will-o-the-wisp, you see him a long way off and take him for your guide, as you would a light in a window, but he leads you away from every road and path, until you find yourself alone in the densest darkness.

Veduskogin—the haunted wood—how can I mention it without thinking of you, Ingeborg Stuckenberg, who sang about it to me—sang, and turning away from the piano, said, " I sang that to you, Johannes." You sang it to me, my friend, and you went astray yourself in the haunted wood, from which you never found your way home again.

* * *

[1]That is, the forest to which one goes to seek firewood. Grieg has composed a piece of music (Op. 32) on this subject, drawn from a Norwegian legend.

The first consequence of my breach with Conservatism was that I left the attic in Christianshavn and my ardently Conservative landlord. I hired a small room in a side street in the western part of the town—it was on the second floor, and between the jute curtains of its two narrow windows I could look down at the large yellow puddles of rain between the paving-stones. Directly opposite there was a baker's shop, the door-bell of which could be heard continually. In this room, in which there was never full daylight, I was to study. In accordance with the new life I had begun I had given up philology and set to work on zoology. Partly because I was interested in the subject, having been a good botanist at home and an eager collector of insects. Partly because it was more in harmony with the new ideas than old, shrivelled philology. Above the hard, red sofa, the chief piece of furniture in my room, I hung up a picture of Darwin, as he looked in his old age, with the thick, bushy eyebrows and the long white beard. On the table before me I placed my other household gods, Georg Brandes and August Strindberg. I spent six crowns—a great sum!—in buying myself a nice little lamp which I provided with a shade of Japanese paper. When the stove was not in a smoky temper it warmed the room quite well. Between the bed in the corner near the door and the wardrobe by the window stood my narrow bookshelves. They contained my three hundred volumes, chronologically and systematically arranged, from the Bible and *Homer* on the top shelf down to Strindberg's *Like and Unlike* and Alphonse Daudet's *Sapho* in the dainty illustrated edition. On the top of the bookcase stood a small plaster bust of Goethe, and next to it, in a good frame, a view of Svendborg seen from a hill above the town—the Sound lying like a lake between the two woods—and showing the two church towers. With a lens (and I had a good new lens on a three-legged brass stand) one could see the trees in the garden at home. Besides this,

pictures from the illustrated papers were fastened on the walls with drawing pins. It was quite a comfortable room in the evening, when the stove was not smoking and the wick of the lamp had been cut straight, so that that did not smoke either.

There I sat then, reading Claus's *Handbuch der Zoologie* and Gegenbaur's *Grundzüge der vergleichenden Anatomie*, but also reading French novels in yellow paper covers, such as *Manette Salomon* and *Charles Demailly* by the de Goncourt brothers, as well as *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Fille Elisa* and *Chérie*. The æsthete and the zoologist were still contending for the mastery in me, but—particularly in the beginning—science had the upper hand, and then I would crowd my table with preparing-trays, pincers, pipettes, bottles of pure alcohol and phials of colouring fluids. Sometimes a frog caught in Söndermarken[1] would have to suffer death under chloroform, and I would stretch it out according to all the rules of the art on the black wax of the preparing tray, open the walls of its stomach with the delicate surgical knife, rinse it out with water and verify the position of the organs according to all the rules of the most up-to-date zoology. Then the microscope was brought into action (a microscope that was not very good, bought second-hand at fifty crowns), and a drop from the big preserve jar standing in the corner, full of bog-water and bog-creatures, was placed under the objective on a glass slide or a watch glass ; the mirror on the foot of the microscope was adjusted and lit up the slide from below, and one sat studying *Cypris*, a delicate, quite transparent little freshwater crab, easily mistaken for a mussel because of its two clear shells.

In Denmark the doctrine of evolution was orthodox at this time, and the majority of our tutors were loyal Darwinists. But it was not to England, where Darwinists, following the example of their master, expressed them-

[1] A park at the western end of Copenhagen.

selves with care and prudence, that we looked for the confirmation of our theories. Huxley alone pleased us; in his attacks on the survivals of religion and the "myth about creation" there was a force of conviction and a bold mockery which appealed to our young and uncompromising souls.

It was not till we turned to Germany that we found what we wanted. In that large witches' cauldron, in which all the theories and philosophies of Europe are stirred into a stew, Darwinism became a world system. The honour is undoubtedly due to Haeckel; he was therefore our favourite author. The grand old man in England was far too slow for us, he spent too much time over secondary tasks; for years he would "fiddle with" earthworms or the tendrils of climbing plants before venturing to write a book about them! The professor in Jena was a far more rapid worker, and what he did not know he evolved in good German "out of his inner consciousness," nor was he one of the kind that would shrink from giving a stronger tone to the rather vague outlines of reality and add a little more evidence to a not very convincing photograph from Nature.

It seemed that in zoology I had found my vocation, a subject I liked and that suited me, a circle of encouraging masters and congenial, intelligent friends. Ah! yes, had it not been for Eros! . . . It was not that I led a very irregular life after that first experience. I believe that many young men, after a first, almost accidental, fall, can live in purity continually for a long time. In spite of what had happened I was still more of a dreamer than a sinner. That first connection was soon broken off; I had encountered one of those stray birds, who, in a large city like Copenhagen, live on the borders of the half-world, and who give themselves, now for pleasure, now out of calculation. But I knew now that such women existed, that such adventures were possible. The memories of that night came back, and in the misty nights of

early autumn, under the spells woven by the moonlight, I forsook my lamp and stove, my room and my books, to wander along the streets and out to the suburban villa roads, where the air was scented with the odour of dead leaves,—was still timid—still seeking—found what I sought—retreated, and sought again. . . .

## II

My first book, *Verses*, appeared in 1887. It was so badly got up, that my friend, Oscar Madsen, always witty, said, " You have already had the honour of being published in a popular edition !"

These eighty pages of melancholy, by the way, were not welcomed with enthusiasm by those whose opinion carried weight in the Students' Society. I found J. K. Lauridsen[1] occupied one day in reading my verses and making parodies of them before a circle of juniors and seniors who were howling with joy. He was reciting slowly and solemnly :

> The day is dead and vanished,
> Never to dawn again
> A span of time is finished—

" A span," he repeated, giving the word a bottomless depth. " A span," he shouted, and then, catching sight of me in the doorway : " Young man, come here and explain what you mean by it."

There was a long, detailed and appreciative review in *Politiken* by no less a critic than Edvard Brandes. The young Danish poet was declared to be a kindred spirit of the writers of new French poetry, Maurice Rollinat and Stephane Mallarmé. No one, I no more than the others,

[1]Politician, of the party of Hörup, who was one of the Radical leaders, the opponent of military loans and for many years the editor of *Politiken*.

knew much about Rollinat or Mallarmé, but the French names sounded grand; besides, the article was signed E.B. and everyone submitted. I was accepted.

It was at this time that I became associated with the man with whom I was to form the closest friendship, a man who was far above me both in talent and character —that is, Viggo Stuckenberg.[1]

Stuckenberg, Oscar Madsen, Sophus Claussen[2] and myself formed a quatrefoil, of which I was the latest leaf. We made our appearance at about the same time before the Danish public. Stuckenberg's *Poems* and Oscar Madsen's *Stories* were published in 1886; Claussen's *Children of Nature* and my *Verses* in 1887, Claussen and I contributing most to the general gaiety, for my part with some unfortunate lines inspired by zoology, about "the leaves of the brain-flower, trembling on the stem of the vertebral column"; Sophus Claussen with the winged

[1] *Stuckenberg* (Viggo) b. 1863, d. 1905. Published his first writings in 1886. These were the novels: *The Breach*, 1888, *Messiah*, a description of the life and ideas of the young generation of his time, and *The Wild Huntsman*, a dramatic poem, in 1894. His best novels are *Fair Words*, 1895, *Valraven*, 1896, and *Asmadeus*, 1899. In the last mentioned he describes with profound pity the lives of criminals and prowlers. *Gossamer* (which in Danish is called "flying summer") and other poems are sheer masterpieces. In regard to their psychology and spirit of compassion they show traces of the influence of Russian novelists. There is but little action in this author's novels; he conveys rather impressions of Nature and of the dispositions of the mind, of the daily variations of the interior life. In the analysis thus given there is a determined clearness, harmony and honesty and a discontent with the world as he sees it.

[2] *Claussen* (Sophus) b. 1865, was at first a provincial journalist. He published his first volume of poetry in 1887, this being followed by *Children of Nature* and *Pipeaux* in 1889 and by *Devilries* in 1904. He has also written novels: *Ties of Youth*, 1894; *Kitty*, 1895; *Between Two Shores*, 1899. *The Labourer*, a play in three acts, was published in 1898; impressions of travel: *Antonius in Paris*, 1896; *Pilgrimage*, 1896. His latest publications are: *The Danish Summer*, 1921; *Heroica*, dedicated to Johannes Jorgensen, and *New Poems*, 1925. A selection of his poems has been translated into French by M. Guy Charles-Cros, under the title of *Poèmes Danois* (*édition de la Sirène*). Deeply sensitive to the music of verse, and possessing a temperament overflowing with the joy of life, he has above all expressed the sensuous excitement which the contemplation of Nature arouses in him.

words, " Rather one kiss from one hundred girls than a hundred kisses from one girl . . ."

*Verses* obtained for me the personal acquaintance of Georg Brandes. I had, as was right and fitting, sent the great leader a copy, even taking it myself to his door. I received his letter of thanks in my small room ; for the first time I saw his blue ink and his graceful, light and flowing handwriting. There were only a few lines—would I care to pay him a visit—he would be pleased to see me.

Then for the first time I found myself face to face with the great man whom we admired so much. Like all young radicals, I had been one of the queue on the steps of the University, before the door with the eagle above it, " gazing towards the setting sun "—I had shared in the tearing race up the stairs and along the corridor to get a seat in the lecture-room. Now I saw him at close quarters, had him quite to myself, and that for two hours and a half, and felt like a young man at a ball, who has been introduced to a beauty whom he has long admired from a distance, and who then torments his brains in vain to make interesting conversation. My diary for that evening contains only the following lines : 6 to 8.30 p.m. G.B. First at his house, then a walk right out to Vesterbro and back to Östergade. A strange, greyish and weary-looking, intelligently ageing face, kind, straightforward manner. Clear, well-thought-out opinions. My head in a whirl as we went out in the street, stupid and commonplace all the time. His noble hatred of hypocrisy. The narrow-mindedness of the French on the sex question. " But, so far as that is concerned, nobody is thinking of abolishing marriage." " You young people are so poor, and you are all alike—you have been so influenced by the English ! " " You seem to me to have made a theory for yourself about the impossibility of happiness. Why, we are *all* unhappy !" We went along the main thoroughfare in the dusk, through a crowd of women. Parted at the

corner. " Good-bye, and come to see me again." Home in the moonlight, along the lake-side. The air is light blue. A thin dusky haze over the town. Roofs shining like gold, the silver-bright leaves of the poplars wet, motionless.

The little remark about " the dusk through a crowd of women " is characteristic. I saw them, even when walking with Georg Brandes. It was not without reason that I had chosen Doctor Faustus for my patron saint and drained the cup which makes one " meet a Helena in every street." The generation to which I belonged was, in fact, naïve and insatiable and was radically void of conscience, to an extent that would perhaps have shocked the great leader if he had had any conception of it. The preceding generation had more or less adopted the principle : *Libertin d'esprit, sage de mœurs*. We younger people translated libertinism from theory into practice. Here, if anywhere, might be applied the words of Mephistopheles about " the golden tree of life " which we greatly preferred to the tree of knowledge, and which, by the way, was *also* a tree of good and evil . . .

## III

From the very beginning of our relationship I recognised Stuckenberg's superiority over myself. As a result of this, soon after I had made his acquaintance I took a selection of my poems to him, very carefully written in my best writing, with a request that he would read them and tell me what he thought about them. He was not a great admirer, and justly so, of my first artificial and twisted verses. That we became the friends we did become was due rather to the fundamental ideas and feelings we had in common. We began our literary existence together as incorrigible realists. Aroused by Georg Brandes, influenced by Jacobsen, Amalia Skram

and Schandorph, we had been trained by the great Russians and the great Frenchmen, Turgenieff, Dostojewski and the Tolstoi who wrote *Anna Karenina*; by Beyle, Merimée and the de Goncourt brothers. We were trained at that time to a sense of reality and a respect for reality which was to influence the rest of our lives. When we met we were still quite young, and our aptitude for the observation of mankind was not particularly developed. On the other hand, we were persistent observers of ourselves; in the analysis of our own feelings we were persistent, not to say desperate and above all we observed Nature and loved Nature. We wandered through Nature, and no feature, no slightest change in the expression of the great Mother's face was unperceived by us. The nature of Sealand and Funen, of Svendborg and Nyborg, of the Copenhagen suburb of Frederiksberg, was what we loved, and we loved it so much that we never felt any longing to see the blue mountains of Italy or the canals of Venice. A wooden paling round a garden at Valby was really dearer to us than all the marble palaces of Italy put together, a paling or an old shed, grey and weather-worn by many summer suns and winter rains, such as the artist in whom we found our own feelings reflected, Albert Gottschalk, loved to see them and paint them. In him, as in ourselves, the same cool tenderness, the same deep sentiment, was stirred by the commonest and apparently most insignificant things. In his pictures, often hasty sketches, but always containing deep poetic feeling, we found our own love of the flat country and grey skies of Denmark interpreted; and the willow trees, windmills and cabbage-fields which he painted were more precious to us than any of Böcklin's cypresses, laurels and marble villas.

Behind a wooden paling, a good old grey wooden paling in a landscape of green and lonely meadows near the sea, with small runnels of water through them, the post-mills here and there, a distant streak of one of the

outer quays of Copenhagen, and above it all a high, clouded and restless sky : this, it was quite certain, was our spiritual home, this was where we liked most to meet. We might be, and often were, sad, melancholy and depressed, despairing to the point of suicide, but, as Gottschalk said one day in his curt manner, " When you have killed yourself you can't go out to Valby and paint." He remained alive, then, and so did we.

* * *

There was about Stuckenberg's manner, as about his poetry during these early years, a delicacy and courtesy, a chivalrous, and at the same time, an easy and pleasant grace. While Oscar Madsen's verses, as well as my own, in virtue of their descent from Gjellerup's [1] *Pink Hawthorn*, were still somewhat wooden, and Sophus Claussen had not yet found his willow-flute, but made some attempts in ponderous verse on questions of the day, Stuckenberg's lyric poetry had from the very first the light and playful flight of the dragonfly, the sign-manual of the born artist in verse.

This characteristic feature of his earliest poetry harmonised with the impression made by his personality. The abrupt transitions in his talk, his sudden smile, his wavy hair, his floating tie, his elastic step, the stick he waved in his well-gloved hand, all conveyed an impression of what used to be called in earlier days an artistic appearance.

Soon after making the acquaintance of Viggo Stucken-

[1] Gjellerup, Karl b. 1857, d. 1919 in Dresden. Began his career as a student of theology, but coming into contact with modern Biblical criticism became a free-thinker and instead studied the art of ancient Greece, the German classics and modern English poets, in particular Byron and Shelley. Influenced by Georg Brandes, began his literary career with a series of polemical and free-thinking books. Settled in Germany and there studied Indian philosophy in which he found inspiration for some legendary dramas. Gjellerup's poetry is not strikingly original but he shows great poetic intelligence and ability and in many of his varied writings there is a delicate and serious moral interest, and a deep and exalted outlook on life. In 1917 he was awarded one-half of the Nobel prize for literature of that year.

berg I was introduced to his relatives. At first my visits had been confined to Viggo's room: I generally went late in the afternoon and left when his sister Elsie put her fair head in at the door and announced that tea was ready. Soon, however, I was asked to go with him across the corridor, and before long I had my regular place at the Stuckenberg's supper table.

At one end of the table sat Stuckenberg's father, the warden of the Western Hospital. He was a broad-shouldered man, with a broad beard, very talkative and with a ready laugh, always eagerly interested in the literature and politics of the day. Here, too, was Viggo's younger brother Börge, who would sit contemplatively gazing into the depths of his teacup, or, raising his apostle head, look over the table to see whether there were not still a grilled herring which he might appropriate. Here the refined and gentle hostess attended to the tea-urn and looked after the wants of her guest. Interwoven in the conversation of their elders were the laughing and bickering of the two youngest children, a boy and girl of about fourteen or fifteen.

In May 1887 Viggo Stuckenberg married Ingeborg Pamperin. She was a good companion, an intelligent friend of her husband's friends and she often accompanied us on our rambles. I still remember, it must have been in 1887, how my birthday was celebrated by a picnic to Grib Forest. It was in November, but—like Saint Francis—we loved the weather in all its moods. I remember, as though it were yesterday, the dark, coppery, almost blood-red, thick carpet of fallen leaves, the veiled, leaden-coloured surface of Grib Lake and a closed summer pavilion, on the verandah of which we sat down to eat the lunch which the Stuckenbergs had brought with them. There were no benches, but we sat on the floor, leaning against the walls of the pavilion; sat there side by side eating sandwiches and drinking port wine from a flask. There were empty beech-mast

husks on the floor and we amused ourselves in trying to throw the black, prickly things out between the narrow openings on the railings of the verandah.

The November dusk fell early and we went to the stopping-place at Grib Lake to wait for the train. While we were sitting there side by side on the wet, black board, in the slowly falling dusk, the quiet of the great wintry-wet forest descended upon us. None of us said a word. All at once, far away in the great forest, a breath of wind, like the breath of night, a heavy, heaving sigh, arose, and passing underneath the grey sky, swept over the thousands and thousands of naked tree-tops ; it grew stronger and more distinct as it drew nearer, at length it reached us and shook the trees over our heads, to fall away again and grow fainter and fainter, at last dying away far off in the deserted forest.

We all three looked at each other when the last sound had died away, but none of us uttered a word. Then the train came and we went home as though from a solemn festival, an hour of worship in Nature.

* * *

Shortly before Christmas I went home to Svendborg. There I soon after received the following letter :—

24th December, 1888.

Dear Johs.,

I am already missing you—may the Lord forgive me ! For this strange reason I am writing to you. For of course I have nothing of any interest to report.

Yesterday, Sunday, we were at the Western Hospital. I read Amici's *Constantinople*. Have you read it ? There is a fine bit in it about the old walls of Stamboul, which are still standing as when Mohammed II knocked holes in them with a battering-ram ; they are a long way outside the town, smothered in weeds and silence. You ought to read that some day ; you can skip all the rest of the book.

Ah, well, as I said before, I have nothing whatever of any interest to report. I'll have a go at the weather, I think; it was windy yesterday and it is snowing to-day. You had a bad time, I suppose, as it was a downright gale. I was quite worried on your account, until about one o'clock; I thought that by that time you would be ashore.

A happy Christmas! and have a good time until you get some more stuff like this. Letter-writing bores me, but what the dickens am I to do when your diggings are empty and the Great Belt is between us?

Yours as ever,
V.S.

In none of the letters which I received from Stuckenberg can his almost feminine tender-heartedness be more clearly perceived than in this one. He entered wholly into the lives of his friends and felt at one with them. His anxiety as to how I would stand the crossing to Funen in the stormy weather, inclined to sea-sickness as I was, is of the same kind as his distress one summer evening at Langelinie, because I, with my weaker sight, could not see what he was able to distinguish. It was a mild, quiet, rosy summer evening, the Sound was perfectly smooth, and the lanterns were lit on the ships riding at anchor in the roadstead. There was in particular a single lantern a long way out, which had a strangely fascinating effect upon Stuckenberg's mind, with its distant lonely glimmer, and it distressed him that I could not see it too and share in his mood. This was the secret of our friendship; we felt alike, as if we had been brothers. One of the first things Stuckenberg told me during one of our twilight talks in his room at the Western Hospital was the following little incident from the short time when he had been to sea, with the intention of going into the navy.

The training-ship on which he was a midshipman had

arrived in Portugal on her cruise and had anchored in the roadsteads of Lisbon. Together with the other midshipmen he was given shore leave to see the city. At first he went with them, but soon after he went off by himself. The sun was burning down on the streets of the city, rising from the waterside, and Stuckenberg walked between rows of light-coloured sleeping houses, higher and higher up. At last he found himself quite at the top, at a place from which he could see far away into the country. And out there—a long way out, in noon-quiet, noon-sleeping Portugal—out there he saw a white spot, a distant church or the white walls of a monastery, shining far away in the sunny haze. Then the longing surged up in him for that distant place out there in a strange country, where people whom he was never to know lived and had their being, and he had to make a great effort not to yield to his longing, but to turn round and seek his way back to the ship.

I had felt the same in quite other circumstances, when, as a boy, on beautiful days in spring in Svendborg I had stood at a window in the roof of my parents' house and gazed at the country spread out green and fresh in the sunshine, at the white roads winding up over the hills and disappearing into the country towards the woods standing in a bluish haze against the horizon.

We therefore met in our admiration for Pierre Loti, through whose writings there is a longing of the soul for the far away, like a *leit-motif*. It was this that made Stuckenberg apply to himself and to me the words spoken by Eigil in Oehlenschläger's *Vaulundur's Saga*: "I have no hope and am driven on only by a troubled longing for something better, far, far away in the wide world. That is why my eyes gaze hour after hour at the blue and empty heavens; that is why the stone in my helmet is blue. That dark, dull, devouring longing is my Valkyrie!"

It was this feeling in Stuckenberg's soul that was later

to find expression in his two romantic stories, *Sun* and *Asmadæus*. It was also this longing which at length broke up his life, when the time came that civic comfort, the civic task, nay, even civic happiness no longer satisfied him, but in which—like the old king in one of his stories—he talked thus complainingly to his soul:

"Yes, happiness is thine now, and thy courage is strong like thy limbs, and thy faith like thy blood. Never more shalt thou hunt happiness amongst the grey mountains and over the wide steppes; never more shalt thou sleep on a dewy mound, and waking, count the stars above thy head, and no morning shall hear thy song in the lonely woods. For thy riding is over, and the years will pass and pass, and thou wilt sit here, and time will be dead around thee, and that which thou didst win will be dead like a song that is ended."

## IV

"He has sold his microscope and bought penholders with the money," Stuckenberg told our common acquaintances, to explain my conduct at this time. Many people who took a friendly interest in me had been surprised and grieved to hear that I had given up my studies, which were to have laid the foundation of my means of living, after the publication of my first book in prose—*Legends of Spring* (1888)—even though the book had by no means had a brilliant reception. The *Dagblad*, for instance, began its review of it as follows: "There is an animal in Australia which looks so ridiculous that the very sight of it makes people laugh. This animal is called the wombat. Mr. Johannes Jörgensen is a sort of literary wombat." Even friends were cool in their comments; I remember my disappointment on the morning when *Politiken* in a supplement gave a short, not very enthusiastic review by Peter Nansen. I was no

longer being put on the first page, with a long article by E. B.

Radicalism had me more and more in its grip. The liberty of which I was dreaming was not a political, but a personal boon; reform and revolution were only the means to its attainment. As in my childhood I had thought with despair of the absolute power of God—that there was no other God, that there was no appeal from Him—so I now felt desperate at being confined within the framework of a society and forced either to walk along the beaten paths or to make no progress at all. Amongst my papers of that period I have found a dialogue, intended to be inserted in my book, *A Stranger*, which I was then writing, and which was meant to be a Bible of anarchy. The conversation is carried on between my "alter ego" in the book, *Andrew*, and one Lönborg, who is the composite figure of my radical friends.

* * *

"The trouble is," said Andrew, "that it's the pigeon-hole people who have the upper hand over you and me and those who think as we do, so that if we want to live at all we must submit to their conditions. It is they who distribute the honours—these "great almoners" of society. When we youngsters come into the world they don't ask us, 'What would you like to do?' but they order us, 'Do this or that, in this or that way.' They carry one's bread and one's good name in their pockets, and besides all that, their historians pronounce our funeral oration."

"Do they bother you so much?" asked Lönborg, in an absent-minded tone, which made Andrew feel that his friend's thoughts were attuned to a rhythm quite different from his own. Yet he went on, feeling superior because he felt so absorbed by his hate, and ashamed because he could not refrain from unburdening himself.

"Yes," he continued, "for what right have they to

demand that I should conform to their ideas about civilisation, that I should work for aims which *they* have set up, seek the posts that *they* offer, struggle to attain the positions that *they* consider desirable? When all my happiness consists in lying on a heather hill on a summer day and feeling the spicy scent intoxicating my brain and setting up a delicious activity in all my nerves; in feeling myself spun into a net of the buzzing of flies and the singing of grasshoppers and the darting about of flying beetles; in letting my glance follow the flight of butterflies from Aaron's rod to gorse and thyme, or letting it glide away in blissful peace beneath the distant fleet of clouds riding at anchor under the blue sky."

"But man, you can't live on dew and moonlight, on grasshoppers and honey?"

"Yes, that is just what I want to do! I can't see that it's my duty to society to pass an exam. when I would rather walk in sea-boots along the banks of a bog."

"Go in for forestry!" put in Lönborg, but Andrew would not be stopped.

"They can starve me out of it, but they can't prove to me that they are right in compelling me to give up my freedom. I cannot do anything but what my nature dictates to me, and it does not tell me anything about passing an exam. in German and getting a post as assistant master in a provincial school."

"What do you propose to do, then?" asked Lönborg.

"I don't know," Andrew cried. "I think I must have been changed at birth. I feel like a changeling from the underworld, brought up here among people gifted with quick hands and ready tongues. I believe I must originally have been meant to tramp along the banks of rivers and through marshy forests, like a Huron in moccasins, and that by some sadly careless mistake in the address I have been made into a Danish student.

"As a boy I never felt quite myself until I was right into the heart of a wood and sitting on a damp mossy

stone by a brook in one of the woods at home. There I would sit watching the glimmering of the water round the stones, and the broad golden light of the sun on the undergrowth, listening to the whispering of the wind in the tops of the alder trees, and looking at the undulating web of sunlight and shadows running down the trunks and leaves of the trees. When I think of it now I feel as if I could still hear the running of the brook through the forest, and it makes me so heavy-hearted that I feel as if I must get up and leave everything, and wander away until I sit in that quiet place again."

Andrew stopped, choked in the words and in the mood of the words. It had suddenly become so vividly present to him, that brook far away, flashing in the sun of spring through a forest of buds bursting into leaf.

Lönborg said nothing, but drew long whiffs from his pipe, while thinking deeply.

" Yes, I feel that I belong to Nature, not to anything else," Andrew went on. " I belong to Nature to such a degree that I can sit on marshy ground and feel myself getting wet with the same delight the plants must have in sucking up the water. Even the cold in the head that I get from it (I have one now, as it happens) is a joy to me, because it's a natural effect of a natural thing."

" It's a good foundation for pneumonia !"

" And what if it is ? Even if I were to die and become a nimble lizard or a merry nut-hatch I think it would be just the right life for me !" Andrew added, smiling.

They both laughed a little.

" Do you know what you really are ? " Lönborg then asked.

" No ?"

" You are a romantic ass !"

" Perhaps."

Again they were silent awhile.

" Romantic or not," Andrew exclaimed, " one thing I do know, I always feel a stranger and always outside

everything. I have *not* the ability to go about humbugging and giving myself airs about being useful to society. I will not do it—and I will stake my life on that," he flamed up. " I tell you, I think the time has come for a far bigger revolution than history has ever seen yet—a revolution which will not aim at printing in blood a new edition of society, with laws, officials and all the old nuisances—but which will abolish *all* society, make all officials and all laws superfluous."

" How are people going to behave in that new society of yours, which is no society ?" asked Lönborg, and there was a smile in his voice. Andrew perceived it, yet he could not refrain from answering :

" Like human beings !"

A little after, he added, " There are to be none but individuals and the free relationship of individuals with each other. And though I may not be the Messiah the world is waiting for, I may become the John the Baptist of the new gospel !"

" Why yes, it doesn't need much talent to get oneself beheaded."

" John the Baptist did more than get himself beheaded."

" Yes, but I believe the attraction he has for you is that he *was* beheaded. And that is what is so thoroughly romantic. The romantic always chooses what is easiest, and it is infinitely easier to die for one's convictions like a hero, than to live for them quite ordinarily through a whole life."

" That sounds very fine and free from any illusions, and is intended, I suppose, to show your greater maturity. But how will you really tackle it ? Don't you think a mark has been put against your name too—do you suppose it won't be remembered some day, when you turn up with your certificates in your pocket and ask for a seat at the official table, that they will say, ' Turn him out ! he is a dreamer !' ?"

"Perhaps. But certificates procure admission to more than appointments. I shall marry my fiancée, gain an honest livelihood in my country, have children and bring them up in the discipline of Darwin and the teaching of Spencer. Don't you think that is enough?"

"Yes, but as it happens, I have no fiancée."

"No, there is a lack of a woman in your life," said Lönborg softly. "There is no one who can give one peace as a woman can."

There was a short silence. Then Andrew said, "There is a peculiar thing about me, though; in that way, too, I feel different from everybody else, even from you, because it seems to me that every time I think I catch a glimpse of happiness at the end of the path I am walking on I get timid—like a man in rags going up to a palace to ask for shelter. The nearer I get, the slower I walk. It is as if I should have to give up something of myself in getting near to happiness. So it always ends in my turning away and taking refuge in myself, in lonely overshadowed paths. And yet I am afraid to do even that thoroughly—my own self terrifies me and I flee from its mystery out to the varied impressions of a many-sided world. And so I turn incessantly about two poles like an outlawed star."

* * *

I was a little over twenty-two years old when I wrote these lines. This was the anarchy to which I confessed, in deed and in truth. The axe of rebellion was laid at the root of the tree of life itself. The young man had convinced himself that there was no God—that moral law had no higher sanction than the approval of society, or, at the best, the consideration of a doubtful "greatest happiness of the greatest number." Moreover, in all probability existence had no purpose, or only the purpose that one put into it oneself. He therefore respectfully took leave to give up work. He "went on strike," and there was no one who could tell him why he really

ought to resume his labours. The common weal was of no consequence to him—the less so because he had to look after his own personal welfare, and according to all humane principles had the inviolable right to do nothing but stroll about and enjoy Nature.

A time was to come, as I have already indicated, when Viggo Stuckenberg would champion the same anarchy in *Sun* and *Asmadæus*. But at present he was far from doing so, and this raised a barrier between us. At that time he was developing in the opposite direction from me. Even before his marriage he was teaching in a school, and afterwards teaching took up his whole day. This regular life suited him. During the time he was was not in the class-rooms he led an exemplary life ; he was always at home at fixed hours in the day, writing half a chapter or a whole one of his new book, *Messiah*.

I still remember how he said good-bye to me one evening with these words, " Go and get married, you abominable, unattached idler !" On the other hand, I teased him when I found him in his room one fine summer evening, enveloped in the smoke from his long pipe and writing a cycle of verses on elves. His brother Börge also found that there was but little poetry in these domestic lyrics, and thought the title for them should be, not *Elves* but *Eleven Verses*.

It often happened that I found Börge more congenial than his brother. Like myself, the tall painter was unattached, and often, on my return to my room, I was glad to find the lamp lit, the fire roaring in the stove and Börge comfortably settled in the red sofa behind my table. We then combined our meagre resources and arranged a supper table, Börge strolling across the street to the baker's for bread, and to the provision dealer's for butter and other supplies, which he lowered into the deep pockets of his ulster. Meanwhile I attended to our wants as regards drinks. After a satisfying meal we usually went out, wandering about on the suburban

villa roads, looking for adventures and sometimes finding them. They were seldom very complicated and if the evening passed off without incident we were quite content, walking along silently side by side on white winter nights, bright in the moonlight, or on grey nights of thaw, when there was a trickling of water from all the rain-pipes and through the gratings at the kerb. If we tired of this we generally directed our steps to the house where that respectable citizen, Börge's brother, was not always equally delighted to open the door to two wet, snowy or muddy vagrants, who broke in upon his domestic comfort, demanding brandies and sodas and refusing to go away again. On the other hand, his wife was pleased to see us. Viggo Stuckenberg and Ingeborg Pamperin were the most ideal couple I have ever known. They were both handsome ; they were deeply attached to each other ; they had ideas, sympathies and tastes in common. They both regarded marriage as a free relationship. It was to last as long as the feeling which united them endured, and which alone, in the opinion of both, entitled a man and woman to live together. Everything that love did not sanction was immoral to both of them. Everything that love demanded was allowed. It was only out of consideration for their relatives that they consented to an official marriage ceremony, even to a wedding in church. We young men who frequented the Stuckenberg's house were all more or less in love with the young wife. She was understanding like a sister and solicitous like a mother. She played with us like a girl, made us miserable by a chilling look and happy with a confiding word, a touch on the arm or one of her radiant smiles. She was a friend to whom we could talk about everything ; she was the Muse to whom we wrote verses for the reward of a kiss on her cheek. She was the *cantinière* in our little vanguard army ; she was the Valkyrie who led the way in battle ; she was the priestess who tended the sacred fire in our souls.

Fru Stuckenberg was all this—also to her husband. But during this period of Viggo's respectability that happened to him perhaps, which happens so often to contented husbands: he settled down in his happiness. His wife became a part like the other parts of his life, an item on the daily programme, like school, dinner and his pipe, and therefore, when he took up the cudgels for Ibsen's Tesman, she took the part of Hedda Gabler. At that time, not long after the birth of their first child, this young wife seemed to become restless and troubled; often she would remind one of a large white butterfly which has strayed into a room and flutters vainly against the ceiling or a closed window.

I remember in particular one evening after a small party which Stuckenberg had arranged—I think it was to celebrate the appearance of his book *Messiah*—Georg Brandes was there, also Erik and Amalia Skram.[1] The tables were laid in two connected rooms and there were lighted candles everywhere. Stuckenberg went about smiling and happy, pleased with his home, his work and his guests.

My super-sensitiveness had received due consideration and I had been allowed to keep my old-established place on the left of the hostess, and yet, as usual on such occasions, I was not really happy until the guests had left, those distinguished and less intimate great people who took up almost too much space in the tiny rooms. When Georg Brandes had departed in a cab, and the Skrams, after many farewells, had set out on their way to a tram, a cosy little hour followed in which we enjoyed the afterglow of half-consumed candles, the smell of cigarettes and a picturesque disarray of festive things, flower vases, wine-glasses, bowls of oranges, fine napkins. . . Spoilt child that I was (and enjoyed being) I lay on the sofa with a favourite cushion under my head. Stuckenberg was in slippers and had lit his big pipe.

[1]See footnote: *The Red Star*, page 74.

Fru Stuckenberg alone was still restless—she walked about to and fro—gathered a few of the things together, gave it up again, finally sat down to the piano, to sing in her fragile violin voice a passionate song by Bellmann,[1] or Grieg's hopeless "I lost myself in the haunted wood." Then Stuckenberg calmly knocked out his pipe, stood up beside his singing wife, and looked as utterly respectable as if he had been all his life an irreproachable government official.

Was it on the night after this, or on another of my numerous Stuckenberg evenings, that I wandered about unusually late on the suburban roads? It was a calm, light blue night and there was a moon. I strolled along the white, tree-shaded roads, until I found myself in an avenue and suddenly stopped in the middle of the road like a horse that refuses to move another step. My desperate loneliness overwhelmed me—Viggo had Ingeborg... When I left them I had caught a glimpse through the open door of the lamp hanging above the double bed and faintly lighting up the room. Others had others. I had only had an unhappy boyhood's love and some transient adventures, some of them sentimental, some of them brutal. I had broken away from my home, grieved those dearest to me—I had given up my studies, I had staked the whole of my life on my own headstrong will and on the poetic talent I imagined I possessed. And now I seemed to myself so thoroughly insignificant, so stupid and foolish, indeed so reckless and unscrupulous, so quite without any hope or any future. There I stood in

[1]Bellmann, b. 1740, d.1795. Amongst Swedish poets one of the chief, best known perhaps, for his songs of the taverns of Stockholm. Also wrote poems on Nature, to the music of popular melodies, opera tunes and even church hymns. In his *Fredman's Epistler* a cycle of poems, he created in Fredman a type which is reminiscent of Falstaff, and the Corporal Molberg, which were new in Swedish literature because of their psychological insight. The charm of Bellman's poetry consists in its blend of melancholy and realism and of an idealism sharply contrasting with the crude description of places of ill-fame and the lives of their habitués.

the middle of the road gazing up at the moon, my breath ascending like smoke in the moonlight; before me lay the park in a mist, all the roads were deserted, everybody was within doors; far away the last tram was jingling away to its home station. There was nothing, nothing for me but cold, indifferent and dead Nature. . .

"Ah, Schopenhauer, give me a syringe with Buddha's morphia."[1] . . . . . .

* * *

The spring of 1889 came, the most lawless of all my springtimes. I had excluded myself from *every* society, that of the Copenhagen radicals as well, and I felt it. I left my old, comfortable room and went from place to place, was quickly given notice because I paid badly. At last I found refuge in a vacant flat. There was no bed so I slept on the sofa. The door was generally left open—sometimes I was awakened in the morning by Börge Stuckenberg standing beside me and offering me a bottle of ale which he had bought on the way. We began the day by drinking each other's health. He often brought his paint-box and other materials, and in the course of a few hours he had produced one of his clever water-colours, which he sold to a dealer in the quarter for fifteen or twenty crowns. We lived on this money for a few days, or on what I had made by writing some verses for *The Illustrated News*. The teaching engagements in schools which some friends had procured for me I persistently neglected until my employers felt compelled to dismiss me. My sole study was that of Russian Nihilism. Besides Tschernyschewski I read Krapotkin and Stepniak, and amongst the older writers Bakunin and Herzen. My hatred of society also led me to an investigation into the origin of that odious institution, and in the reading-room of the University library I read and made extracts from Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, as well as the sociological works of Tyler, Lubbock, Morgan and

[1] Strindberg.

Bachofen. During the light summer nights when I was too hungry to sleep I read Murger's *Vie de Bohême*.

My friends, literary and zoological, had joined in the general exodus from town at Whitsuntide; I was left behind alone, under a sun that every day revealed more clearly the shabbiness of my worn old winter suit—and where was a new one to come from?

"It's all utterly damnable," I said in my diary. "Edvard Brandes jeered to-day in *Politiken* at youth and enthusiasm. Laundry bill, which I could not pay. Train out to the woods, spent too much. It was hot, I perspired and could not rest anywhere. Well-dressed people about everywhere; I was in my old clothes, with no prospect of ever getting any others. Anemones like bobbing butterflies on stalks. Lay beside a pool and had a chat with a frog. Ate a piece of steak which cost me one krone sixty. In the train. Frozen by the wind in the open carriage. Got out at the north station, went to the office of the *Social Democrat*. Sent to a concert to report. The Habanera from "Carmen"—reminded of how Ingeborg St. used to sing it. Wrote a short criticism. Moonlight, poplars beside the lakes. A black-haired girl came dancing up to me, a moment's talk, said good-bye to her. Why? Tired, sick of everything, think I am going to be ill, die—everything is all wrong—hate everybody."

Further down on the same page this quotation from Renan: "*On peut reconnaître qu'on s'est faussé d'esprit mais non le redresser. Et puis la déviation a tant de charmes, et la droiture est si fastidieuse.*" So this life after all! In spite of everything!

And yet things continued to be not very cheerful. On May 13th the diary has these lines: "Cannot do anything, lie on the sofa, let the time pass. Everything so hopeless. Feel quite unable to do anything. In the evening to report on a play at the *Folketheater*. Afterwards stood for a long time behind a dewy hedge, looking

over the silvery water of the lake and listening to the faint sounds of the night. The scent of the balsam-poplars heavy as incense."

"May 14th. Still the same shrinking feeling of my own littleness and powerlessness. Nervous—cold—coughing—no ability to work, feeling so helpless, outside, poor, in debt, stupid, ugly.

"May 17th. Cannot bear to stay at home and dare not go out in the sunny streets because of my faded trousers. Shivering—nobody to go to—listlessly let everything slide, health, work, art, life.

"May 18th. As miserable as if my heart were to break now, this moment.

"May 19th. Hungry. Crept out to the Western Hospital, where old Stuckenberg gave me supper. Starving with cold, wind bitter, pain in chest and back—have no money.

"May 20th. Sold books—sold books—sold books. Went out to Söndermarken. The twilight notes of the nightingale, although it is still daylight, and the mysterious cooing of the cuckoo, which is like the gurgling of blood from a wound. The large leaves of the sycamores shine with a blue tint in the rays of the sun; cranesbill, cowslips and wild chervil rise from the ground like voices calling me home—home to the familiar paths of my own woods. Feel as miserable and unhappy as a poor lad in one of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales.

"May 22. Feel like a bat that has been pulled out in the sun. Have quarrelled with the day and been defrauded by the night."

## *DÆDALUS*

*Fuyons, ô mes amis,*
*le monde amer et rude.*
ALBERT JHOUNEY

*All the long and weary day*
*The hammer of toil I swing,*
*Gold I beat for King Minos' crown*
*And gold for his armlet and ring.*

*I hammer his sword, his shield I mend,*
*His knives I have to whet ;*
*And as I toil, a-dreaming I fall,*
*Of beating my own gold yet.*

*The dream was fair, but has faded long since,*
*Of an anvil that should be mine,*
*Whereon I might forge the gold of my heart,*
*In a form of my own design.*

*Yet short is the space of that dream for me,*
*The tools again I hold,*
*A hilt I make for King Minos' new sword,*
*And sharpen the edge of the old.*

*But when at length the day is done,*
*Not another stroke will I beat ;*
*Out in the soft and sheltering night*
*I haste to my lonely retreat.*

*There all night long my light I burn,*
*Till the voice of the city sings,*
*There, King Minos, I labour on,*
*And for flight I fashion my wings !*

# I

The summer holidays of 1889, which I spent at Svendborg, were sad and depressing. I had already spent ten terms at the University and the practical result was *nil*. I felt myself that something was wrong, but could not find out what it was. From the point of view of Darwinian evolutionary principles my way of thinking was unassailable. "Morals" (says the diary of July 16th) "are what is beneficial to the tribe, to society. He who does not acknowledge the rights of the tribe cannot acknowledge morals." "Conscience is no 'eternal law,' it is only an inherited term expressing the mode of action by which the best means may be found of procuring social welfare generally. Society grew strong because the individual subordinated himself to the law: But who says that society has to be strong? And who can tell whether lawlessness will not create higher forms?"

This was the question on the solving of which I had staked my life, and about which my thoughts were untiringly circling. I dreamed of writing a *Critique of Conscience*, a work in two parts: one, historical, in which I would point out the origin and development of the moral phenomenon; the other critical, in which I would discuss its worth and deny its general validity. "It was only in the old times," I wrote in my notes for this work, "that religion and morals were beneficial to society. Now the free development of individuals will prove to be the most beneficial, and thus religion and morals will be abolished. The revolutionary is an easily adaptable organism of society. He is a new variety of the species, and begins to live in a new way, like the forefathers of the seal, when they made the change for the first time from living on land, like other mammals, to living in water. The individual who thus breaks away

from the species thereby comes into conflict with that body of society to which he belongs, and existence becomes difficult for him. But if he is strong enough he will be able to found a new variety, and existence will approve of his revolt. Consequently society must give the widest possible facilities for the variations of individuals and their attempts at new modes of living." " The strongest society is that which offers its members the greatest possible happiness. But the individual is happiest when freely able to unfold himself. This is the bone of contention between progress and conservatism. The conservative, normal form of life, as expressed by public opinion, is the normal form of those who are *happy* in existing social conditions. Progress aims at the complete happiness of everyone in a life which is in full accord with reality " (July 27th).

According to these ideas I would seem to be an individual better adapted to life, who only suffered because of having appeared far too soon in a social climate that was still bleak and wintry—like a butterfly in February. I regarded myself as an individual of such higher development when I saw my relatives frequenting the Methodist church in Svendborg—as they did in those days—and finding comfort and happiness in associating with the members of the congregation. " All this faith, which is like dish-water for washing dirty souls," I exclaimed in disgust—"this lip-smacking Christian love, this charitable tone of voice—all these people of limited intellect, who think they can make the world happy under their intellectually cramped conditions." Of course it was also clear to me that " consciousness of sin means a lack of self-respect." When the others went to church I went, defiantly, to the woods and wrote hymns in praise of Pan.

Yet I did not object to expressing modern ideas in Christian terminology, and to trying whether the old words could not be understood in a new, pagan man-

ner. I wondered whether this " peace with God " could not be understood as a harmonious agreement with the heart of things. I thought of the possibility of a " new religion " of this kind. In one of Drachmann's[1] dramas the Italian line, " Siamo sempre sotto la morte " occurs, which was interpreted by the Svendborg anarchist in this way : " Only he who has done what is good in this life can die in peace." Thus is life judged by death and the oldest thought of man becomes new to me. For a moment it seemed as though other old thoughts were to reawaken to a new life. " I walked in the garden in the evening," says the diary of August 13th. " A scent of bitter rainy dampness. Motionless trees and moon-green clouds. I felt so close to the mood in which one feels that one's conscience is stained by all the evil one has done, and—instead of letting it stand as a warning—wanting to get it all erased by forgiveness. I felt the need of leaning against the bosom of an ideal father—I am frightened at myself—do not understand what is weighing me down.

It was only an ephemeral mood, however. A young radical of 1889 did not repent—he let his account stand and pretended to himself that it stood for a warning *Mene Tekel.* Besides, one has no right to seek a comfort which is contrary to the progress of society. As a final retort against the reproach of moral delinquency (idleness, loose living) came this superior declaration, " You seek to be justified before God,—we exercise justice towards man."

And so the graduate in philosophy, J. Jörgensen, went back to Copenhagen to exercise justice towards man.

## II

" Very well then, will you, taking the two articles I have shown you from the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* and the

[1]See footnote *Philosopher's Stone II,* page 55 2.

*Hamburger Fremdenblatt* as a foundation, write me a good and exhaustive article on strong feeding-stuffs!"

It was Ernst Brandes, editor of the Copenhagen *Börs-Tidende*, who made this little speech to me one morning in August, 1889. Having delivered it, he went out and I was alone in a small room of the *Börs-Tidendes* editorial offices in Bredgade 32.

Ernst Brandes was a brother of Georg and Edvard Brandes,[1] older than Edvard, younger than Georg. In appearance he was like the youngest of the three brothers, but he was broader and stouter. He had at first been a stockbroker, had made a certain amount of money, and on *Politiken* being established he became the contributor of its financial news. I had read his book, *Social Questions*, in which he opposed the Socialism of Marx.

In 1889 he left *Politiken* and became editor of the *Börs-Tidende*, which until then had occupied a very humble position, and only consisted of a list of incoming and outgoing vessels, of market prices, rates of exchange, etc., issued by the Merchants' Society. These lists were now relegated to a supplement, and *Börs-Tidende* became a newspaper like any other, with leading articles, home and foreign news, the drama, literature and art. Aided by his two literary brothers, the stockbroking editor soon gathered about him a staff of collaborators.

As for me, I was given the task of writing about feeding-stuffs! I was indebted to Georg Brandes for his brother having sent for me just at the moment when I was on the brink of pecuniary disaster. It was probably to counterbalance my well-known romanticism that such a prosaic task was allotted to me. Meanwhile I

[1] Brandes (Edvard), b. 1847. Brother of Georg Brandes. Began his literary career by translating dramas from Sanskrit and published criticisms of the stage in Denmark (1880) and *The Stage Abroad* (1881). Wrote several plays, such as *A Visit* (1882); *A Betrothal* (1884), etc. Founded the radical paper *Politiken* in 1884. Elected a member of the Danish Rigsdag 1880 and of the Landsthing (Senate) in 1906. Was a member of the Danish Government during the World War.

succeeded in satisfying the demands of Ernst Brandes. My botanical knowledge helped me a little, and the next day he asked me for an article on " Heating and Ventilation."

In this way I became a permanent contributor to the Copenhagen *Börs-Tidende*, an odd enough change for a young man who had only a few months before written in *The Social Democrat*. Naturally it did not pass off without a protest, this being uttered in the verses which precede this chapter. After a few days' work I already made moan in the diary : " Spent three hours in reading up papers and writing a couple of lines, and even then they were altered. Get no time for anything else. Feel so utterly depressed, shut out from all knowledge, all development, all life."

But work had me in its grip—and so had Brandes.

Ernst Brandes was a sceptic, and thorough as but few. I remember that we were talking about Darwinism one day. " So you are like J. P. Jacobsen,"[1] he said ; " you also believe that existence can be explained ! I don't think we can explain anything whatever. As far as I am concerned, you may just as well say that it's God as that it's natural selection ; one is just as little to be understood as the other !"

His scepticism also extended to the domain of morals. Beyond integrity in money matters he made no " ideal " demands on his fellow-men.. His favourite reading consisted of French novels of a daring kind and the little stories on the front page of the *Echo de Paris*—at one time by no means a prudish journal. "I say to myself," he explained, " that what people can write they can also do. It enlightens one about what we really are."

He did not acknowledge what before his time were called " higher interests." Literature meant entertaining reading, art and the drama, the pleasure of the eye ; to write well meant so that people were not bored. " Verse

[1]See footnote, *The Red Star III*, page 79.

—the kind of thing with a rhyme at the end—I really don't read that!" He did not care about music. On the other hand, he knew how to compose choice little dinners, to which he invited me now and then. He was fond of gold coin—every Saturday Christian, the faithful old factotum of the Brandes family, came back from the bank with a small bag of ten-crown pieces, out of which Brandes paid wages and salaries.

Those little dinners were generally an extra reward when I had written an article he liked. After a short time I was promoted from the world of feeding-stuffs to that of foreign politics. The first article I wrote was about Henry M. Stanley, one of the heroes of my boyhood. Without too many scruples about keeping strictly to facts, I composed lyrical variations on themes from war and peace. "But," Brandes admonished me, "don't make me ridiculous by taking too high a tone with Bismarck!"

He often asked me to write from dictation, and in this way I wrote down a whole series of his articles. This method of working gave occasion for a good deal of talk with Brandes, and he enjoyed shocking me by remarks like these: "Do you think keeping slaves is to be condemned? Of course the strongest is right. Oh, so you also believe in that rubbish about having an object in life?"

I could now write home to my people in Svendborg that I was beginning to earn some money. And yet—and yet—"Saw A, B, C and D and remained with them till 2.30 a.m." is the record of the diary for Sept. 21st. "And find human creatures the most miserable wretches. What is the use of all this brutality? This need of converting everything into hunger and animal desire? Everything becomes so insipid and hideous—and inside the clique all veils are torn down. The only things I care about now are the stars! I could worship Orion. If there were no stars! The wind is sighing in the avenue—oh, eternity! eternity!"

It was Nietzsche's midnight song, echoing at such times in a lonely soul. Nietzsche's midnight song, which all we young men had heard for the first time the year before from the lips of Georg Brandes, uttered in his flexible, expressive voice, and to more than one amongst us it was as though he heard the bells of his childhood. . . . . Nietzsche's midnight song—I write it down here, because its ringing tones, coming from the desk of Georg Brandes, heralded the dawn of a new age :

*Oh Mensch, gieb Acht !*
*Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht*
*" Ich schlief, ich schlief—*
*" aus tiefem Traum bin ich erwacht :*
*" Die Welt ist tief,*
*" und tiefer als der Tag gedacht.*
*" Tief ist ihr Weh—*
*" Lust—tiefer noch als Herzeleid :*
*" Weh spricht : Vergeh !*
*" Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit—*
*" will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit !"* [1]

The feeling that the world was deep—this it was that separated us who were twenty years old in about 1890, from the two preceding generations. Orthodox radicalism—and Edvard Brandes, stiff and firm in his principles, represented it better than his great brother—the latter being sometimes inclined to be lyrical—orthodox radicalism did not permit any feelings for the infinite

[1] Give heed, oh man,
What doth deep midnight say ?
" I slept, I slept—
From slumbers deep have I awaked :
Deep is the world,
And deeper than the day had dreamed.
Deep is her woe—
Yet joy is deeper far than pain :
Pass away, saith woe,
But joy doth claim eternity—
Deep, deep eternity !"

nor any dreams about eternity : you had to live *here* and *now*, if you please, and not to dream of yonder and afterwards. The " values " were few in number ; on the other hand, they required no religious philosophy to support them ; they were well able to take care of themselves. " When you have money and women, what can you ask for more ?" said one of the leaders.

## III

Those of us who were then about twenty years old still professed this religion. We had heard Nietzsche's midnight bell ringing the song of eternity, but we had also heard Zarathoustra's exhortation : " I adjure you, brethren, remain faithful to the earth and do not believe those who speak to you of hopes to be realised beyond it. They are poisoners, whether they know it or not. They despise life, they are themselves withered and poisoned ; life is a burden to them, so let them perish !" It had come at last, that great transmutation of values, dreamed of by Tschernyschewski and prepared for by Strindberg ; at last morals had resolutely been turned upside down ; good was being called bad, and bad good. "I might be asked," Nietzsche wrote, " what the name of Zarathoustra means from my lips, from the first immoralist, because it is exactly the opposite which characterises the Persian of history. Zarathoustra is the first who sees the wheel that really sets things going in the struggle between good and evil ; the transfer of morals into the realms of physics as force, cause and aim is *his* work. Zarathoustra created the most fatal of all errors : morals. Consequently he must be the first to recognise it. Not because he has more experience than other thinkers—the whole history of the world is only a great experimental refutation of the sentences about the moral order of the world. But Zarathoustra is more truthful

than the other thinkers. His doctrine—and it is the only one that does it—gives truthfulness the highest place amongst the virtues—in which it is opposed to the cowardice of the " idealists " who flee from reality. For me the name of Zarathoustra signifies the morals which out of truthfulness conquer themselves."

And so—out of duty, because virtue was a lie, but also from inclination, because vice is not dull—we cultivated that which the Master called *la gaya scienza.* " Beyond the borders of good and evil we found our isle and our green meadow," and having listened to the songs of the night we sang the dancing-song : Into thy eyes I gazed, oh, life, And saw the golden gleams in thy eyes of night ; My heart stands still with the joy they give me." Thus did Faust, after the pact with Mephisto, leave his dark cell and sit down at the drinking-table in Auerbach's cellar.

Auerbach's cellar—I frequented it for years ! Stayed away for a time, but returned again—sat there during long winter nights and light summer ones, listened to Siebel and Brander, became intimate with Frosch and Altmayer. We drank together of the wine which Mephistopheles poured out for us on credit, and as we never spilt a drop we did not see the flames of hell shooting up where the drop fell. From the tavern and the drinking the path led to Gretchen's door, where the bolt was drawn back, or to which one perhaps had the key—" I will leave the door on the latch to-night . . . "

But Gretchen, ah, Gretchen, what were you doing in that land beyond the borders of good and evil ? You, whose home was amongst honest burghers, what did you want in a gipsy-camp ? You, who were of human race, what did you seek amongst were-wolves ?

Gretchen, little Gretchen, an artist is not a man, a poet is not a human being. He has the semblance of one during the day, but when the night comes he puts on a wolf's clothing and you hold a savage in your arms, to

such a being have you opened your door! Gretchen, Gretchen, a poet has a brain and has senses, he has imagination and sensibility, but he has no heart; he is not good! He weeps with ease, but he enjoys his tears—he enjoys your sobbing too, Gretchen, and he looks over your head and your brown hair, leaning on his breast, to the writing-table, where the paper is waiting, the paper on which he will write down your tears!'

Gretchen, poor darling little Gretchen! Alas for you, that you met a poet one evening on your way home from your work. A poet who would not stay at home because he did not want to work, and because the object of his desire, the only thing his soft and weak soul desired, was enjoyment and sensation—the intoxication of the heart and senses. He passed you by—in the light from a window he saw your fresh young face, your big brown eyes, and he turned and followed your steps like a beast of prey. You defended yourself, Gretchen, as long as you could, you told him to go, you broke with him again and again, but he persisted in seeking you, he wept at your feet in despair because you wanted to leave him, and you pitied him with all the wealth of your young generous heart; love grew in your heart for one who could not love because he could not forget himself—one who had no right to you because only love has a right to love . . . .

Life seizes us; each of our steps is irrevocable. And a morning came when you thought you had bestowed infinite joy upon a human being. He went home with a cigarette between his lips, his coat collar turned up about his ears and carelessly dragging his stick along the hoar-frosted suburban roads—went home like a person in a novel and noting down his impressions, suddenly pleased with the solitude which just before had been unbearable, thus: 5-6 a.m. In the gloom, which smells rank of burnt paper, one meets all sorts of muffled figures. Streets are being swept. Workmen are going

by, short ones walking with rapid steps, swinging their arms ; tall ones with long steps ; all carrying a bundle in one hand, many having a small can in the other. Women in shawls hurry along in twos and threes. Men with their hands deep in their coat pockets come out of doors which have stood open all night. I meet long, round sanitary carts ; a milk cart is standing by a baker's shop. The driver brings in a pail and places it on the counter. A solitary cab rolls by, white with hoar frost on the roof ; the driver is smoking a cigar. In the frosty mist lights glimmer from small yards—red, lamp-lit windows—broad streaks of light from the bakers' shops, from small breakfast taverns with red, half-length curtains on brass rods. There is a single lamp with a white shade on the counter of a poorly-furnished shop. In the window a tray with bread and rolls. The light in the town grows stronger and stronger, like a great luminous coral against the darkness. At last comes the full concert of the factory hooters and from far away the bells of Frederiksberg Church.

Ah, Gretchen, Gretchen, the self-observing, life-observing writer, making notes about himself and life, was a poor sort of lover for you ! As everything turned to gold for King Midas, so everything turned to art for him. He cannot live because he contemplates himself all the time and takes note of what he sees. Where the observer ceases in him the egoist begins. His insatiable desire to feel transforms reality and all its most real relations into moods, that is, into enjoyment. It is not the poet's affair to tend the sick, not even those nearest to him ; after a quarter of an hour in the sick room he tires of it and longs to go out. His place is by the grave —on the bench by its side, sitting over the dead, who lie so quietly and do not disturb him in his luxurious dreams of the past ; in the sadness of memories and of mournfulness unto death. The poet's mind is at the same time soft as a sponge-cake and hard as a flint—

tender with himself and callous to the feelings of others. Like his great model, Dr. Faust, he seduces you, Gretchen and then vanishes in Mephisto's chariot of fire, to forget everything in the Elysian fields, listening to the songs of Ariel and of sylphs. To you, Gretchen, he does not even send a cheque to help you and the child that is yours and his, but an emotional farewell greeting from a penniless soldier of fortune—a poem like this :—

The air is veiled in autumn mists,
Golden leaves from the trees are falling ;
A whispering wind through the foliage steals,
Farewell, beloved, my young spring maiden.
For the last time I caress thy hair—
For the last time kiss thee.

We had so bravely set our sails
For voyages through days of sunshine ;
In the waves our boat was rudely shattered
And now I bid thee the last good-night,
And leave thee forsaken, by joy abandoned
In the night and alone.

## IV

After working for eighteen months at the *Copenhagen Börs-Tidende* I became sub-editor of the paper and married. With my young wife I moved into the top flat of a house, where we had four rooms and a kitchen. From the back-stairs there was access to a room in the turret at the corner of the house ; this turret-room had eight windows with views in all directions—to the garden suburb of Frederiksberg and to the turrets and spires of Copenhagen.

I was happy as a young husband. "Moving in—joys of home," says the diary of July 1891. "Whispering gardens in the morning sun. Dusky foliage of

tree-tops against the red sunset. Scintillating stars on luminous nights—moon on soft, grey nights of rain. Walk from room to room—feel it to be home. Get up early, lie on the sofa and read Darwin—Darwin again in the evening.—Peace—summer—work." "In the morning before going to the office we sit on the sofa together—the open Japanese umbrella in the window shelters us from the sun, which shines broadly into the room. There is perfect stillness in our rooms—only the summery buzzing of a fly." "Evening, and strolling footsteps on the road below, which is light in the pale, half-clear night—in the north-east the sky is covered by the silvery veil of clouds of a summer night." "A summer quiet in the rooms, my wife speaking to the maid in the dining-room. I think of Svendborg and have only one anxiety, a fear that this will not last."

It did not last, and it was my fault. Never have I been nearer to happiness on a purely human basis than in those years, from the time when I became sub-editor of the *Copenhagen Börs-Tidende* until that paper came to an untimely end at Ernst Brandes' sad death in the summer of 1892. My wife was fond of me, was industrious and persevering, made no great demands, was a good and devoted mother to the child that was born to us in the first year of our marriage. She was upright and straightforward and only reluctantly consented to the Bohemian style of living which was then the prevailing fashion amongst writers and journalists. It filled her with anxiety to see our newly-established, and not very firmly founded home undermined by unreasonable expenses in receiving friends and acquaintances who were only too glad to walk in at our ever-open door, and sit at the table where there was always a place for them. She felt powerless to stop me on the way to the abyss, for she felt, with the greatest bitterness of all, that she did not entirely possess my heart, that I loved, more than her, my art, my work, my freedom.



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In a small book, which appeared about twenty years ago, I acknowledged this moral deficit, and I laid the blame on the "false prophets." "Woe to them who led us into evil," I cried.

Viggo Stuckenberg advised me then, in a criticism that he wrote, rather to put the blame upon myself. I had done so, in the little book in question, but not nearly forcibly enough. Now, twenty years after, I see that my dead friend was right, and how unjust and wrong was that accusing of others. Of my own accord I had approached the fire, and I had no right to be angry when it scorched me.

For no one becomes an atheist without having deserved it. Everyone has the faith he deserves to have. I became a free-thinker, not because Höffding taught free-thought, but because my mind was adapted to it. I became an amoralist and immoralist, not because Georg Brandes induced me to it, but because my moral quality was not higher. Only he who has a heart can believe, only he who is good accepts Christianity. I was not good, I was a creature made up of imagination, sensibility and sensuality—consequently I was predestined to be morally "liberated." Like all weak characters, I desired a life "of freedom—and *without* responsibility." (Ibsen's formulation, "*on* responsibility," deceives nobody. Responsibility, to whom? To a general council of humanity? Or to those inherited dregs of the delusions of earlier generations, which were honoured, so late as Kant, with the name of the categorical imperative?)

There is no avoiding it—no polemics can be used as a shelter—I—none but I myself—made havoc of my happiness. That happiness which, "one morning in September had come towards me; young, bright, radiant with health and looking at me out of big, clear eyes. She was in blue from head to foot—a little blue border of down caressed the soft chin, the white throat. . . . Ah,

that was happiness, generously given out of love for him who would receive it in love. But I was not in the world to love, for I did not know what it was.

And that is my only excuse, that no one had ever spoken to me of love. At the end of the nineteenth century in Denmark, such a state of spiritual ignorance had been reached, that no one knew what love was. In spite of all our psychology we had forgotten what the Middle Ages knew—the true teaching about humanity. When the marriage of my youth, and its happiness, suffered shipwreck it was because I was ignorant about the true conditions of love.

I did not know that the essence of the soul is love.

I did not know that love can go two ways, outward and inward.

I did not know that the will goes out in the love of creatures of the world, of the flesh—in selfishness, in the love of pleasure.

I did not know that the will turns inwards in the love of one's fellow-man, in self-renunciation, in self-sacrifice, in self-denial—in the love of God, who is the fulfilment of all duties.

I did not know that the two ways (outwards and inwards) lead to two opposite worlds. That egoism leads to unrest, hate, passion, ceaseless yearning and desire, and that the other love, which is the true one, leads into a land of peace, light, joy.

I did not know this, but I was to learn.

## V

During these years, that is, the first years of the 'nineties, a change in the general mental attitude began to be perceptible in Denmark. We had had our experiences and found that reality did not correspond to the doctrines of radicalism. Like the egoists we were, we wanted to be happy, and we realised that we were not.

One of those who gave utterance to this new state of feeling, which was echoed in foreign literature, was Sophus Claussen. We saw each other frequently, mostly at night, when I came back from my editorial work. I liked to stretch myself on a sofa in a corner of his room, with a rug over me, while Claussen walked to and fro in a dressing-gown, vigorously smoking a cigar, or, by preference, a long pipe. Sometimes he would stop at the writing-table where a tall lamp shed a light on a litter of papers, seize a newly written sheet and read some of the concise verses, the chiselling of which took up much of his ample time. At other times he would pull out a much-read volume from among the untidy heap of books and newspapers which covered the large table in the middle of the room, and in the rhythm of a cradle-song he would recite stanzas of Byron or songs of Burns.

One night I found him deeply absorbed in a book with a yellow French cover. Hardly had I settled myself in my usual place on the sofa before he began to recite, while beating time with the stem of his pipe, a sonnet which is here given in its original form:

*O fins d'automne, hivers, printemps trempés de boue,*
*Endormeuses saisons! Je vous aime et vous loue*
*D'envelopper ainsi mon cœur et mon cerveau*
*D'un linceul vaporeux et d'un vague tombeau.*

*Dans cette grande plaine où l'antan froid se joue,*
*Où par les longues nuits la girouette s'enroue,*
*Mon âme mieux qu'au temps du tiède renouveau*
*Ouvrira largement ses ailes au corbeau.*

*Rien n'est plus doux au cœur plein de choses funèbres,*
*Et sur qui dès longtemps descendent les frimas,*
*O blafardes saisons, reines de nos climats.*

*Que l'aspect permanent de vos pales ténèbres,*
*Si ce n'est, par un soir sans lune, deux à deux*
*D'endormir la douleur sur un lit hasardeux.*

" The muddy roads of winter "—had I not wandered on them myself, alone, or with the faithful Börge? And " forgetfulness on a haphazard couch," we had sought it and found it, or sought it and not found it, and wandered on in the streaming, rainy night, the trickling night of thaw, the moon-white night of snow, like the lawless vagabonds and night-birds that we were. Who else had felt as we did, who had written as we felt? I asked, and Claussen told me: Charles Baudelaire.

This name was then almost unknown in Denmark. Georg Brandes had had no use for it. There was no room for Baudelaire in the " Main Currents "—that drama in six acts of the intellectual life of the nineteenth century. Perhaps this work of the great critic is no longer read in Denmark? Like the well-composed romance it is, it made a great impression upon us. One saw first the victory of the principle of freedom over the *ancien régime*, the French Revolution and the Goethe-Schiller humanism. Then came the reaction: Rousseau, Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Bonald, de Maistre,—the powers of darkness are victorious for a time—it is in the days of the Holy Alliance, Chateaubriand restores Christianity, Hugo and Lamartine hymn the Middle Ages. In Germany " Obscurantism " celebrates terrifying witches' sabbaths (Novalis, Schlegel, Zacharias Werner). But the holy spirit of revolution finds a refuge in England; there it inspires Byron, Shelley, Keats and Thomas Moore—while Wordsworth and Coleridge champion odious principles. With the revolution of July comes the great awakening—the fire of liberty flames to the skies in French romanticism and " young Germany," (Victor Hugo in his republican period, Musset, George Sand, Balzac—Heine, Börne,

Gutzkow, Freiligrath, Herwegh, etc.). The literary struggle is crowned by a political victory (the revolution of February) and the work finishes with an apotheosis reminding one of the closing scene in a Tivoli[1] pantomime: "Thus perishes the principle of authority (Pantaloon) never to rise again." Intellectual freedom (Harlequin) and emancipation (Columbine) are seen embracing in the limelight—above them hover in the clouds the spirits of free-thought and free humanity. A closing chorus of unprejudiced Copenhageners and the final words of the stage manager: "Nothing above and nothing besides Nature. From the cheese symphony in Zola to the fairy tune in Shelley—but nothing beneath the cheese cellar and nothing above the fairy music!"

Where was there room, in this pantomime, composed without too many scruples about historical, literary truth, for a spirit like Baudelaire? What was a contented doctor of philosophy in Copenhagen to do with the Parisian who saw the maggots creeping in his own heart, and not only in an old cheese, and who—instead of frankly making himself the mouthpiece of Nature—broke down with the cry: "Ah, Lord, give me courage and give me strength to see myself, my soul, and not to loathe it!"

*Ah! Seigneur, donnez-moi la force et le courage*
*De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût!"*

The very cry, "*Seigneur!*"—"Lord!"—was enough to make such poetry impossible in good, free-thinking society. "It seems to me such bad form to talk about religion," a young free-thinker said one day. And no one likes to be guilty of "bad form." It was not the religious tone, however, that attracted Sophus Claussen and myself to Baudelaire; on the contrary, we were rather repelled by it. We were simply impressed by the

[1]See footnote, *The Red Star III*, page 87.

*force of truth* in this poetry. That winter, in which the *black star* of the French poet had appeared on our horizon, we had both had bitter experiences. Looking back later on those years of my youth, I wrote: "Alas! I have myself been one of the alchemists of the art of love! But I know that when the morning came the gold of the evening had often turned into withered leaves or black slags. It happened one night, when I wanted to distil a delicious magic drink of intoxication and forgetfulness, that in my alembic I found only a bitter fluid, which was gall, if it were not tears, salt with unending thirst and hopeless loathing!"

It happened to us, as it happened to Baudelaire, *une nuit d'être près d'une affreuse Juive—comme au long d'un cadavre un cadavre étendu.*

*La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine*
*Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,*
*Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,*
*Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermines.*

*Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste*
*Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,*
*Et le riche métal de notre volonté*
*Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.*

*Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lyces*
. . . . . .
*Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices*

*Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde*
*Qui ferait volontiers de la terre un débris*
*Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde,*
*C'est l'Ennui!"*

We, too, were like this. The word "loathing" ("Ennui") occurs again and again in the poetry we wrote then. We saw ourselves in the merciless mirror

held up before us by the French poet. It was not without reason that Georg Brandes, in that first talk I had with him, complained of the narrow-mindedness of Frenchmen on the sex question. I had already seen for myself that he was right when I began to read Zola. Judging from modern Danish literature, I had expected to find in the author of "Les Rougon-Macquart" a revolutionary solving of problems—attacks on marriage, glorification of free love, proclamation of the rights of Nature to be independent of the regulations of Society. To my unspeakable surprise I found that the great naturalist-writer had, in the domain of morals, the most "bourgeois" ideas and certainly did not give the impression of being what was in Denmark called "broad-minded." Nor was Baudelaire broad-minded either. The personality of this poet is remarkable for its blending of romanticism and Christianity, of lawlessness and law—and romanticism and lawlessness duly receive their sentence. In an essay which I published early in 1891 about the French poet, I wrote (to the great distress of Edvard Brandes in *Politiken*) the following "quite Catholic" words: "In all of us the same war is waged, to which Baudelaire has given expression in his poetry—the war between two souls, one of which "clings to the joys of the dust," while the other "seeks higher regions."

This war is as old as the world and it is of the world's inmost essence. God and Satan will be at war until the end of time. So much I knew, and so much did I acknowledge. And yet I continued, like Baudelaire himself, to feel the strange attraction of unhappiness. I felt like one of those "spirits of Saturn" of which the French poet spoke—"at our birth a fairy poured a drop into our soul, a drop of the juice of that strange plant of longing, which the old romantics called the blue flower. Because of that we feel that we were born under the sign of the moon, under its power our moods wax and wane and we lack the will to control them. To that power our

night prayers ascend on the lonely roads. We long for the place in which we are not, for the woman we do not know—we love the perfumes that bewilder the thoughts, all weird flowers and the cats that wail on nights of spring.

That longing was to be my ruin—and my salvation.

## VI

A time now came in which religion began to awaken. At first uncertainly, vaguely, a primitive religion which I often defined by the (self-made) Greek words *το μεγα δαυμα* "the great amazement."

The diary for August 2nd, 1891, says: "A continual sense of the mystery of existence—of the infinite—of the wonder of the world (I hear the rain against the window-panes)—a kind of piety which is hurt, for instance, when Ernst Brandes speaks with contempt of astronomy." Others felt the same—Garborg's "Weary Men" came out in the autumn of 1891: Helge Rode[1] stopped me in the street and told me that the Norwegian writer, once so radical, had passed over to Christianity in this book. "Everything is getting so oddly uncertain," the poet added. "I suppose we have been taking too high a tone about our science and our denial," he continued. He was himself dabbling in theosophy, and reading Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. Soon after he was to publish his collection of poems, "White Flowers," that inarticulate cry for God.

After having read "Weary Men" I made this note: "The old radicals' brutal denial out of hatred of ordi-

[1]Rode (Helge), b. 1870. Educated in Christiania. Literary work: Poems: *White Flowers*, *Old and New Poems*; Plays: *Sons of Kings*, *A Summer Adventure*, *The Myth of the Sun*—the last named being a masterpiece. He has admirable artistic gifts, and in his latest writings, on religious subjects, which have been published in book form under the title of *The Place with the Green Trees*, he shows a sympathetic appreciation of Catholicism.

nary ideas. A need of protesting against these authorities. Reading of Maurice Rollinat. The Stuckenbergs and Claussen here to-night. When they had gone I stood alone with my wife and looked over her shoulder at the green armchair in the corner; suddenly I had a strong and horrible feeling that everything is a dream—all is unreal—the chair, the room, my wife, the child, my marriage, myself, as if everything had happened in a dream, and as if I awoke now and saw that I was in the land of the elves—drawn into the mountain—caught in a spell." A day or two later, (Dec. 10th): "Christ, ah, Christ!—I have forsaken Thy path to get where literary radicals make play-writing the chief object in life, since people want to see plays. Christ, Thou wert once my God, Thou in whom twenty centuries have believed, why cannot I believe in Thee too?" 2 a.m. "White clouds driving across the dark-blue, clear and frosty moonlit sky, across the stars, across Orion. It looks as though Jacob's Staff was sailing slowly along. I see Sirius, Procyon, Rigel, think of those remote worlds and cannot resist the need of a purpose—a unifying symbol, like that of the Middle Ages, a relation between the individual and the infinite—such a relationship is necessary for happiness, for the well-being of life."

Besides Baudelaire I began at that time to read Edgar Allan Poe, Maeterlinck, Pierre Loti, Maurice Rollinat, as well as Huysmans, Barbey d'Aurevilley, and Villiers de l'Isle Adam—all of it so hostile to life, Georg Brandes declared, when I told him about my reading one day. A New Year's prayer for 1892 is evidently a result of this reading which was tinged with Christianity. I wrote it in French: "Seigneur, faites de moi un poète qui puisse chanter vos louanges dans ce monde bas et impur." I was no longer afraid of using the word "Seigneur," as Stuckenberg was not afraid of closing his story of "Valraven," dating from that time, with a despairing, "Lord, Lord!"

The same longings for the infinite continue to visit me. (Feb. 12, '92) "I look a long while at Sirius, floating far away in eternity and I feel that there must be a great aim in all this—for the world, for life, for the race, for man." A conversation with Helge Rode strengthened this feeling. "At Helge Rode's. He shares my feeling that a mystic sense of the world is perhaps the really valuable element in man. It seems to him, as it does to me, that there is a want of the mystic sense of eternity in modern man, and that this want makes society of the present day so barren and empty to live in."

In the summer of 1892 a little book of mine came out, clothed in a green cover and bearing the green title of "Summer." A few days after the appearance of the book the *Copenhagen Börs-Tidende* had a long front-page article about it, full of appreciation and signed by Georg Brandes himself. Now, surely, I ought to be happy? Married and with a pleasant home of my own and a child besides; books on my shelves, photogravures on the walls from Burne Jones, Rossetti, and Botticelli—in fact, everything that was typical of a young literary home. I had friends, I was the associate of men of talent, many of them famous. What did we do in those long evenings, all those nights until the small hours? We drank, we smoked, we talked, we read aloud. I can still see before me the sitting-room in which those literary symposia took place—a long, low room, with two doors, one opening to the corridor, the other to a very small room in which I wrote, it had a sloping roof and many plants in its attic windows. We had many guests, young people of both sexes; we read poetry, Scandinavian, English and French: Helge Rode, Poe, Rossetti, Swinburne, Browning, Rollinat, Mallarmé, Jules La Forgue, Arthur Rimbaud and a little of Verlaine.

It was during these literary vigils that we became aware of our opposition to the preceding generation. We were

rebels because we were young and did not feel inclined to exchange the old authorities for new ones. The gospel of dulness and everydayness had been preached to us long enough, the sober study of sober reality, the uglier the better.

If life was hideous it behoved us to endow it with a fictitious beauty. If the day was dull and cold we chose the night, which hid every rag under its velvet cloak, and covered every wound. We became lovers of darkness, that mystic darkness which makes even the commonplace poetic, and we re-discovered the moonlight, that poor moonlight which had been condemned as baleful romanticism. We took the liberty of finding Tieck's and Eichendorff's moonlight poems beautiful—we opened Novalis and in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* we read that wonderful first chapter of the hut on the mountain, with the moonlight through the window. All the old moods awoke, our hearts swelled with the longing and with the yearning of romanticism and its dreams. Deliberately we climbed over the fence which Georg Brandes had set up, and gathered flowers in spite of his "No admission." When we were called "Men of darkness" in a lecture given at the Students' Society (where the new movement was regarded with some disquiet) I answered with a free rendering of Heine: "You have put out the lights of heaven and wonder that we are men of darkness." In vain did the orthodox radical art critic who had given that lecture warn us against the *Merman* of the folk-song. We had not flinched from making a covenant with Lucifer—were we to be daunted by a merman?

So much the less because we felt that the current of the time was bearing us up. Against those who had once called themselves Europeans, we now represented Europe. The *Echo de Paris* published Huysmans' *Là-bas* as a "feuilleton," and everyone felt that this was a step from naturalism to something new, which was

really very old. Rémy de Gourmont published *Le Latin mystique*; Sâr Péladan's books were beginning to be read; Jules Huret carried out his enquiry; Léon Bloy came to Denmark and preached the gospel of the new idealism.

In the generation to which I belonged no one could be of a purer red than Viggo Stuckenberg. His "Messiah" was orthodox realism; one was told more about the stair-cases, gas-jets and door-plates contemplated by the chief person in the book, than about the life of his soul. But now it looked as if Stuckenberg had had enough of this begging from door to door on the steps of reality —where no door was opened and no gentle hand was stretched out to offer the starving soul the bread of poetry. Like the rest of us he made the discovery that the steps by which we went up and down were *endless*— that if you kept on going up you not only reached the garret and the cat prowling on the roof, but you came out under the stars,—and if you went on going down you not only arrived at the cellar and the rats, but you descended by shafts into the abysses which open beneath even the most commonplace everyday life.

Thus it happened that we felt like Durtal in Huysmans' novel, that we were dwellers in a tower. Alfred de Vigny had already shut himself up in his tower of ivory. We, too, desired to climb up in a tower and stay there. We did not by any means think of a church tower—that was still far from our thoughts. To us a tower merely signified something solemn, something that stood alone and not in a row like houses, something poetic and not utilitarian, a building haunted by the spirits of bygone ages, from which one could gaze at the stars.

One night, when all our guests had gone, I went up into the real tower above our flat. It was a black night in August, all the gardens were sleeping in deep darkness, and in infinite space the stars were burning. Again

I felt the " wonder of the world, the nothingness of man and a fearful awe in the presence of this great universe, from whose hand we have come, in whose power we are—felt a deep, despairing, wistful religion.

When I had come down again I went to my table and wrote—a hymn to the night, a poem in prose which was a programme :

An immense, starry sky above a black earth.

Silence and solitude. Only far away a solitary figure, a small wanderer in the depth of the night.

The wanderer approaches, the figure grows larger, he stops.

He leans against something which is perhaps a fence or a gate-post, and he looks up at the stars.

Then he speaks, into the darkness, to himself, to the eternity of his soul and the eternity above him.

He speaks : " Far away in the night, life and death are lying like slumbering shadows. From the great heavens silence descends like a whisper—like that soft whisper in which God once revealed Himself to Elijah.

" Above me burn the abysses of infinity. I see blue and green suns flaming far away in the black space. The Milky Way trails its cloud of star-dust across the sky, a pillar of smoke in the footsteps of the Eternal.

" Alone I stand before Thy face, Thou mightiest, and like Jacob at Pnu-El, I will wrestle with Thee. I will drag from Thee the secret of Thy name, and I will cry it in the streets and market-places. For mankind is fainting with hunger for Thee, Thou Eternal, in every path they are seeking for Thee, if they could but find Thee and understand Thee !

" Yes, I will proclaim Thee in the world of time, oh, Eternity, with Thy darkness I will soothe the eyes that are weary with the day, oh, heavenly night ! I will light the everlasting light of the stars for the souls which have been dazzled and burnt by the sun.

" Wherever I go there shall be stillness. The clamour

of the world shall cease, and the thoughts of the day shall die. There shall be stillness wherever I go.

" But not the dumb, rigid quiet of death. It shall be a quiet like a soft whisper—a quiet that is the sound of the innermost beating of the pulse of life, and the sigh of the slumbering soul of the world.

" And he, who has heard the voice of Eternity in the stillness, no longer forsakes life, he trustfully builds his peaceful hut on the border of the giant forest of existence."

Thus spake the wanderer in the night.

And he was silent and walked on over the desert places of the earth.

And a light shone far away in the darkness and he went on towards the distant light.

The light was that of a great city, and he went on towards the city to proclaim Eternity in the streets and market-places.

## *THE TOWER*

*Le clair de lune est aussi vrai que le jour.—*
EDMOND DE GONCOURT.

### I

"JULY 6th, 1892. I have asked Ernst Brandes for a summer holiday, 'Yes,' he said, with a sad look. A little after, in connection with something else, he added, 'You are ceasing to take any interest in what is going on in the world.' And he mentioned Gladstone."

Ernst Brandes was right. I *was* ceasing to take any interest in the events of the day. One romantic evening of wine and verses Stuckenberg had defined our aspirations under the term of "reaction." He had dreams of a periodical, which was to be our organ and to bear this title. We were reaction, in so far as we were a repercussion. But we were also a continuation of Radicalism, for we still had the same object as hitherto, the search for happiness. And happiness was in other places than in the offices of the Copenhagen *Börs-Tidende*.

It grieved and embittered Brandes to see me go away for summer holidays and the pleasures of my own home country, while he—though no one knew of it—stayed behind to fight the last desperate fight for his own and the paper's financial existence. A few weeks more and he was to lie down in a lonely corner of the Deer Park, with a cigar between his lips, waiting for the death he had himself sought by poison.

Having no suspicion of this, I was meanwhile enjoying my holidays in Svendborg.

" To sit in quiet rooms, rapidly writing a great deal with a light reed pen. To put the work away and go into the rose-scented garden. To play battledore and shuttlecock with my sisters and see my wife looking handsome and contented amongst them. To finish my writing and drink coffee under the elder-tree with the whole family and then go for a walk through streets scented with elder-blossom down to the beach at the landing-stage. To sit on a grassy mound near the water and listen to the rustling of a large poplar overhead and a bird singing in its branches, and to look out across the calm, blue water, in which the rosy summer clouds are reflected. To watch the flight of the white gulls over the woods at Taasinge and the green fields beyond them. To hear faint sounds of rowing on the water, and on the bridge of the landing-stage the steps of a man coming ashore from his boat. All this is far too beautiful—I dare not believe it can last—my happiness is so frail—I fear the gods . . ." (July 10).

Evening of the same day: " Stars are coming out, bluish-white, silver-white, reddish, sparkling like dew-drops in the sun. Arcturus—the three stars in the shaft of the Plough—Eternity, oh, Eternity !"

Next day: " Wind. A trail of white clouds flies across the sky like a flight of birds and disappears behind a green hill, over the curved earth. The marvel of the world, the riddle of which I *must* solve for myself."

I read Shelley and make a note of this passage in one of his letters (April 10th, 1822): " Perhaps all discontent with the lesser is a sign of the feeling that one has a claim on something greater, and we who admire Faust are on the right road to Paradise."

There certainly was discontent with the lesser—a great and thorough discontent. " In a depressed state of mind on a long walk late in the afternoon," say the notes of July 15th. " After a mild rain the country is fragrant and the clouds are beautiful. Pass a stonebreaker sitting at

work in a drenched waistcoat. My soul falls from the harmonious beauties of Shelley to bitter pessimism. What are we? Who are we? What are we in the world for?"

"I feel that I am unproductive, am anxious about all the money needed to keep my wife and child, and which I can only procure by my pen. I am filled with loathing of the literary life, of the daily hireling toil of the journalist, feel as if I ought not to have come home, but to have gone far away on a long journey."

"July 17. It occurs to me that perhaps all souls are emanations of one and the same eternal soul, and that this eternal soul is perhaps just as evil and coarse and stupid as the greater part of mankind. In that case poetry is a hopeless revolt against the eternal power; beauty is the work of Prometheus whom the gods want to crush."

"I walk in the garden in the evening. The air is light and grey, starless, quiet, only somewhere a faint sound of running water. Suddenly the thought breaks in upon me—Atlantis—the land I seek in vain, out on the ocean, the land that has for ever sunk into the waves—the land of truth and joy!"

"This name and this thought occupy me further during the next few days. Atlantis, an idea for a novel. Subject: fall of the ideal under the superior strength of animal instinct—further, a religious development from sure faith in science to the great amazement, the great horror of the world-riddle."

I wrote some "Summer Letters" to the *Börs-Tidende*. I worked at an essay on Shelley for *Tilskueren*[1]—I also wrote a long poem in Shelleyan stanzas, in which I gave expression to all my disquiet, uncertainty and weariness. The verses were vibrant with pantheistic, religious feeling. Nature was set up as the good principle against the evil one of culture.

[1] *The Danish Spectator.*

The essay on Shelley, which was published in *Tilskueren*, was really more about myself than about the English poet. I was thinking about myself when I wrote about him: "From his birth he was one of the lonely ones of the earth, a stranger amongst men. His tormented, aspiring soul, his constantly striving spirit sought in vain a home amongst the well-ordered people of this world. Like Cain, his brow was marked with the sign that condemned him to ceaseless wandering, and the children of Abel recognised him and drove him out of their houses and their countries. He was of the kindred of Faust and of Ahasuerus—he had that love of the night which is peculiar to all those whose souls aspire to something beyond reality."

Whatever Shelley may have been (and my description was not incorrect, it was only one-sided) this was what I was. In spite of my position as a citizen and my regular marriage, in spite of my suburban home in Copenhagen and my parents' home in Svendborg, I was and remained a stranger, a solitary: *Ahasuerus*, as I had called myself in a poem.

The diary is full of impressions of long wanderings, often nocturnal ones:

"July 21. Walk up to the top of the hill and lie in a burning sun, gazing up into the blue. Hear the larks singing and see a little white cloud high up fading deeper and deeper into the blue, as a white stone sinks through the water and disappears. And my soul melts away like that white cloud, is dissolved in the great blue."

"July 22. Walked a long time during the night. Heard the murmur of lovers from the benches hidden under the foliage—heard what the thousand leaves of the poplars whisper when they kiss each other in the silence of the night—heard the flinty sharp ears of the barley crossing their blades with a sound like the swords of elfin armies being sharpened. Having at last reached home, I went into the garden. Stood on that little familiar

plot of ground, and looking out between the dark shadow-outline of the trees and houses, the Milky Way of the heavens and Vega and Atäir seem to me like a well-known landscape, a country I have seen from my earliest childhood. A star shot across the sky and I felt the reality of the infinite, the wonder of life, the joy of being."

" July 29. Feel melancholy and powerless—understand nothing of the world and am troubled by the multitude of human lives and their object. Pondering, I try to find out on what path I am going, how I have reached it and whither it is leading me. Find no answer, no knowledge, no way out.

" Old habits return, I take out old books from my uncle's library. I botanise and read Goethe. ' Hatred of reality,' I meditate, ' the longing for ideal beauty—as in Shelley—is necessary in order to produce works that will lead reality nearer to the goal of eternal beauty. The ideally discontented are martyrs in the cause of the development of humanity to higher forms of soul life and spiritual beauty. All true poetry must therefore be opposed to existing reality, and is necessarily repellent to the adherents of the prevailing reality ; it is hated, despised and persecuted because it foretells what is to come.' "

The last days at Svendborg are sad. " I go into the cemetery—it is growing dusk ; it is wet. The wind rustles loudly in the big trees—yellow leaves lie along the wet paths. Look out across a country, the fields and woods of which are cold and veiled in an autumn mist. Driving clouds trail across the sky—leaden, yellowish, cold against a cold, milky-white background. Involuntarily my thoughts go back to the past—to a summer vanished long ago—to that calm, golden sunny afternoon in that selfsame cemetery, when the scent of jasmine hung over all the graves and a thrush sang so sweetly—then—long ago . . ."

The last evening. " The moon is over the point. The

gold-shimmering waves are lapping the shore, and the whole sum of my life seems like a round nought, like a moon." In this mood I arrived in Copenhagen on the evening of August 8th.

In an evening paper which I bought at the station I saw in large headlines the announcement of the disappearance of Ernst Brandes.

## II

The " great King Minos," then, was dead, and Dædalus was free to try whether the wings at which he had laboured during the three years of the toil of duty could bear him up. His success in flight was only tolerable.

At first I obtained some work at *Politiken*. Edvard Brandes entrusted me with a section of foreign news—I was given the unattractive task of writing about scandals and sensational lawsuits. On September 17th the diary records : " My article of yesterday not inserted in *Politiken* ; sub-editor wants to ' keep it for a little while '—he gave me a copy of *The World* of about thirty pages and asked me to come back at five (it was then about 3.15 p.m.) with ' a couple of really capital, intelligent articles,' and he opened his eyes wide and grinned." The work only half satisfied me, especially as I was still absorbed in metaphysical problems and slowly working my way through Schopenhauer. After a dull and cold day (September 19th), on which I had felt starved in the street, because my overcoat was not good enough to be worn in the daylight, and starved at home because I had not money enough to buy fuel, an evening came on which I felt troubled, tormented, tired, and yet desiring work, with smarting eyes and a dry, hot mouth. I had to drink brandy and light all the candles in order to bear it. " I cannot write ; I am annoyed with B. (the sub-editor), who has worried me again to-day, and with the whole staff

of radical incompetents, journalistic jobbers, systematic corrupters of the public. I feel the old hostility between myself and mankind."

*Politiken* paid me 8 öre[1] per line for my articles, and an account which I have kept shows that in September 1892 I wrote altogether 1747 lines, which gave me an income of 139 kroner, 76 öre.[2] I could still exist then; the diary for September 30 contains the following little domestic picture: "4 p.m. I am alone in the house and sitting in the dining-room. Light and air stream in at the open window at the side. Opposite to me the light oak side-board stands against the brown wall, its handles shining like little bright suns, the alarm-clock and the table-bell standing on it reflect the window in their bright nickel—there are yellow and white stripes of light from the mirror, which reflects the tall vases and the large bowl standing before it. Two bunches of blue and white asters stand in vases under the two shelves at the sides, with the bright brass candlesticks and their white candles. In the mirror, the bevelled edge of which gleams with rainbow reflections, I see the hanging-lamp between the two door curtains, and between the latter the yellow bedroom door, the sunlight falling on it in sharp, slanting rays."

I still kept up my home, that home which was gradually becoming as dear to me as the home of my childhood. "Happiness day and night, peace at home with my wife and our child, only the fear of all that is hanging over our heads. And yet on that grey September day, with all its gaily-coloured flowers and crisp air, I have a calm, peaceful harvest feeling. . . ." "Unrest and uncertainty, much reading and thinking hither and thither. At midday, with my two dear ones under a low medlar tree in the gardens of the Agricultural College. Birds were singing in the branches overhead; there was shade—I looked across a green lawn with fruit-trees and flowers in the

[1]Equal to 1d. [2]About £7 5s. 7d.

distance, red fuchsia hedges, large sunflowers. My boy in his little white tunic playing on the grass beside me—I felt conscious of life, of my soul, of happiness." August 10: "Read Eckermann's talks with Goethe all day. The evening is clear and starlit. Close underneath a quivering Cassiopeia shines a silvery white Jupiter. Oh, wondrous eternity, lifting the soul above time and poverty! . . ." "Happiness consists in being *bound*, not outwardly and arbitrarily, but *religione*. Out of my feeling for home arises a feeling of being *at home in the world*—a religious outlook on life. Not the shallow optimism of the upper classes, not the acrid scepticism of the evil, but a deep awe of the infinite, the divine life—a mystic but modern religion which gives joy and peace. A primitive religion, a religion of the future, a Christian feeling and a heathen surrender to our Father's will and the power of our mother, Nature—our Father's will, which speaks to our souls, and our Mother's law, which we perceive about us."

During this autumn, 1892, I published my book entitled *Moods*, containing poems and reprints of newspaper articles. It was favourably reviewed by Vilhelm Andersen,[1] but did not win much applause from the leading Radicals. "What do you want with all that love of the night?" asked Georg Brandes.

The diary of October 12th contains these lines: "Lay awake in the night, heard my wife's breathing, the boy tossing restlessly in his cot—and all my life seemed to me to be so ineffective. Neither to-day nor yesterday have I been able to write anything for *Politiken*. The editor's secretary had rushed in and said that 'We really must have some stuff to-day!' It was 'a confounded nuisance' they didn't get anything yesterday. 'You

[1] b. 1864, Professor of Danish Literature at the University of Copenhagen. One of the best critics in Denmark at the present day. In his untiring study of the personality of the authors whose works he has analysed, his books are a blend of the history of literature and of psychology and self-revelation. His style is very vivid and personal.

must positively write something that will please the lower section of our readers !'

This is what we have come to, then. This is the result of struggle, of emancipation, of work—to write for the ' lower section ' of the readers of *Politiken*."

It was at this time that I conceived the idea of publishing a review of my own. Strindberg had once, in a fight with another clique, applied to himself Voltaire's saying : " *Rien n'est si désagréable que d'être pendu obscurément.*" I now did the same : I did not want to be strung up in secret ; I would not die before I had spoken.

## III

From the autumn of 1892 till the spring of 1893 there was a continuous series of " noces et festins." We had not read Baudelaire in vain, and we took for our motto his words : " Enivrez-vous toujours." We followed him and Verlaine in making a cult of intoxication. We no longer drank the brandy and soda of Bohemians, nor the absinthe of the " Pirates." We conformed to the best literary models (Des Esseintes in Huysmans), we became inspired on the choicest beverages. During that winter Knut Hamsun[1] passed through Copenhagen on one of his Bacchanalian tours, and a troop of nymphs, fauns and

[1]Hamsun (Knut), b. 1860, one of the leading contemporary Norwegian writers. He had at first to make his living by doing all kinds of casual work, then went to the United States with the intention of becoming a Unitarian minister. He gave up this plan, and for a time worked on a farm in Dakota, afterwards becoming a tram conductor in Chicago. Returning to Norway, he published *New Soil* and *Hunger* (1890), which established his reputation and in which he shows that he was influenced by Dostojewski. He then went on a lecturing tour in Norway and attacked all the leading authors of the day, including Björnson and Ibsen. The following books by Hamsun have been translated into English : *Hunger* (1920), *Mothwise, Pan, Shallow Soil, Growth of the Soul* (1921), *Wanderers : On Muted Strings, Under Harvest Stars* (1922), *Victoria* (1923), *Children of the Age, In the Grip of Life* (1924), all of these being published by Gyldendal ; *Benoni, Segelfoss Town* (1925) and *Rosa* (1926), published by Daniel Knopf.

satyrs, joyous and Dionysian, hailed his Thyrsos. These symposia—orgies if you like—often lasted three days. We were habitués of the " Bernina," the last to leave the round, marble-topped tables in the corner room, the first to drink an early gin and bitters, to eat a salted herring and to read the morning papers at the window overlooking the main thoroughfare.

Viggo Stuckenberg took no part in these Bacchanalia. He had moved out to a house from which there was a view across fields, and market gardens with their hot-houses and manure heaps, the latter being a joy to him when the smoke ascended from them in the spring. He had a small garden of his own ; in one corner of it there was a table beneath a large poplar. " Here I sit listening to the flow of eternity," said Viggo. He still had his work at the schools, but he had given up his natural history studies, and in their stead was engaged in reading ancient history. At this time he was writing *Roman Scenes*, which was followed later by *The Wild Huntsman* and *Valraven*—all of them turning about the one bitter thought, " Woe to the happiness that women bring to men." At the same time I was busy with plans for a philosophical novel about the will and its conversion (in the Schaupenhauerian sense) ; first part : The Garden of Eden ; second part : The Tree of Knowledge ; third part : The Fall ; fourth part : The Kingdom of Earth ; fifth part : Redemption. These plans were afterwards embodied in the book which I entitled *The Tree of Life*.

In our inmost hearts we both felt disappointed with life, with love, with woman, with marriage. We were wrong ; at any rate, *I* was wrong, for I asked for more, far more, than I gave. Both Viggo and Ingeborg Stuckenberg are resting in their graves now, and it is not for me to judge between them. Their paths diverged, as the paths of even the best men and women diverge. One day during the summer holidays Stuckenberg wrote to me from the country the following letter :

July 24th, 1893.

Dear Johs.,

I received your letter to-day, many hours earlier than I usually receive my daily reminder that the world is wider than my horizon. I was walking along the road, listening to the rustling of the poplar leaves, looking at the clouds and smelling the ripe rye. Then I met the postman, who stopped under a large poplar, opened his bag, letting the wind stir the papers and letters in it, and handed me yours. I read it as I walked along, in dirty, windy weather, quite alone, surrounded by billowing cornfields and the waving trees of the peasants' gardens.

I am so homeless that a few words from you, no matter whether you are just as sad as I or sadder still, is like slipping for a moment into a place of shelter and the warmth and light of a lamp. I was in a despairing mood at not possessing a Jerusalem to which I could wander barefoot, alone amongst pilgrims, and wash my soul clean and begin a new life, that sacred human life which I—and all of us—live in such a way that we must have a thousand years of eternity to weep it out in the lap of a god. Your letter warmed me up, as one is warmed up when suddenly meeting a fellow human being in the catacombs.

The country out here looks as the fields and trees have always looked in all my summers. But in earlier days my soul idled in the grass and became corn and sunshine and a thatched roof and a strip of road free of care by the ditch—now it is standing at the bottom of a leaky ship, pumping day after day, and seeing everything through a wretched little port-hole.

This afternoon the rain is pouring and the damp air comes in through the window like a thin mist and makes the paper I am writing upon clammy, so that the pen seems to wander over a bog. And yet it is comforting to be in this room, which is as low as a

tomb. My hat is hanging on a beam over my head, and there are wet footmarks from my shoes on the clay floor. My bed stands in a corner where the bare walls meet; it is a small, low, iron bedstead. At the window this table, at which I write. This place is as bare as a cell, but there is a warm, gloomy quiet and a feeling of peace in this air, which has pervaded this room through summer and winter, and given house-room for men and women for nearly a hundred years. I would cheerfully give away everything I possess elsewhere, if only I could stay here a year or two. Sit here, go out and come home again and hang up my hat on the beam and be alone.

Your
VIGGO STUCKENBERG.

Later, when I transcribed some lines from the letter given above in *The Truth and Falsehood of Life*,[1] he recognised them and confessed that he had once nearly arrived at the same solution of the problem of life as I.

## IV

*The Tower*, a review of literature and art, appeared for the first time on October 21st, 1893. Assuredly a more idealistic undertaking never saw the light in Denmark. The editor—that was myself—received no salary, the contributors no fees, the publisher no profits, and the purveyors of paper no payment. The first number opened with a scene from Stuckenberg's *Wild Huntsman*, next came a programme article by the editor, in which it was announced that symbolism was making its entry into Denmark. Symbolism meant idealism, i.e. a belief in a hereafter. The article asserted, like Schopenhauer, that

[1] Translated into French under the title: *Le Néant de la Vie*.

the modern lack of morals was a consequence of the modern lack of metaphysics. "The view upward is closed to modern man. There is no life outside that in which we have our daily being, and—according to the new orthodoxy—there ought not to be any other. Man is therefore shut up in an entirely material and temporal world, and when death comes everything is at an end. It follows from this that life is felt more and more to be restricted, simple, commonplace, something that one deals with according to one's whim and fancy. It has been forgotten that life is a wonder, a riddle, that it is sacred and should be lived with reverence. But there are still sporadic souls needing infinity, bliss and life in a deep and significant world."

In the Radical headquarters *The Tower* aroused mixed feelings. A few months earlier my book, *The Tree of Life*, had appeared, and Georg Brandes had orally uttered his objections: "It is a Catholic book, with alternate states of ecstasy and repentance. An un-Hellenic book." The book and the review, however, both fell into line with the new movements in France, and France inspired respect. That *The Tower* also smelt Christian the keen Customs House noses were not long in discovering.

Georg Brandes then wrote an appreciative article in which he took his soundings, so to speak, and expressed the hope that we had taken our stand within the domain of Nature, and that our idealism was not a synonym for supernaturalism. In a reply, which, as a kind of challenge, was dated Christmas Eve, I declared that *The Tower* was not only the organ of supernaturalism but even of "clericalism." After that there could be no misunderstanding, and in private conversations Georg Brandes henceforward called the review *The Round Tower*,[1] and its editor "an unscrupulous and ambitious person, who wanted to make his name at any price."

[1] An observatory tower built by Christian IV in 1642.

I was therefore in the position of having no support from the literary authorities and of being without any financial basis. In the spring of 1894 I published a short story: *Homesickness*; the sum of two hundred kroner which I made by it was my sole income for several months. We had left our flat, and in November moved out to a first floor in a market gardener's villa behind Söndermarken. The first days in the new surroundings were wonderful. The diary contains entries like these: "Coming down the path to the house. The land lies like a flat shovel full of violet darkness against a glowing red evening sky. A train rushes away, leaving a greenish streak of smoke behind it. Near me the low chimneys of the hot-houses send their smoke up through the gloom; I smell the smoke and hear the sound of shutters being laid on the glass roofs. Towards the south a large bright star appears in the greenish air behind a row of black poplars.

"A light frost. Above the russet carpet of fallen leaves in Söndermarken hangs the smoke of dusk. Behind the lacework of the sombre trees the sky glows fiery red, and against it crows are wheeling, like loose leaves whirling in the wind. It is calm. I scare the crows, so that they fly out from the tree-tops with a rush of wings like the flapping of leaves against each other. They circle silently in the mauve air of the dusk and return again to their trees. I stand a long while watching their circling, and feel as contented as in the early years of my youth on dusky winter evenings." (Nov. 8th). "My wife and I, light-hearted and happy, return from town. Behind the black trunks of the trees and their domes the sunset is purple and red lowest down; further up, orange; then green like an emerald; and highest up the air is like blue silk. Gratitude to the hand that again has bent us towards each other." (Nov. 21).

As the last words indicate, a crisis had passed over our married life, and we thought it was now over. We both

seriously believed that we could build a house without any foundation. But only a month after comes this :- " Rain, cold, slush. The direst need of money. Everything is ebbing out. And I cannot manage to write anything, occupied as I am with *The Tower's* affairs and with running hither and thither to procure a few most necessary shillings. I wander home, tired and hungry, wet and weary, and am good for nothing." (Dec. 7th). Then early one frosty morning a cart with a load of coals stopped in the road outside the house—three grimy coal-heavers rang the bell, rummaged about, shouted and used abusive language, and drove away again because they were not allowed to deliver the coals without being paid in cash.

From that day on it was misery. Our landlord, a worthy market gardener, had hitherto treated 'the author' and his family with consideration. The very same day on which that unfortunate black cart with the coals so recklessly ordered had stopped outside the house, he came up and gave us notice to leave. From that moment we had the enemy within our gates ; as we had him ringing the bell, so we had unpaid bills from the symposia days at the other house, visits from furniture dealers from whom we had bought furniture on the instalment plan, and who threatened us with taking back everything ; dunning letters, grey letters from solicitors, blue writs read at the front door before the maid . . . this domestic assistant soon took her departure. Our house was a long way from all the shops, and it was not pleasant to have to go half an hour's walk to the grocer's and have to buy goods on credit—which was even sometimes refused. Besides this, we had to do everything ourselves —cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, everything, and downstairs the landlord and his family made fun of our misfortunes, talked aloud on the common staircase about " the wretched fine folks upstairs. But they will have to clear out in April !" Yet in the midst of the floor-

scrubbing, wood-chopping, the coal-buckets and refuse pails, a continual burning thirst for truth, a hunger for knowledge, ceaselessly craving to be satisfied and never leaving me rest or peace. "Spiritually restless, restless for life or death, read many things, read with ardent desire to reach a knowledge of the truth. Feel that, temporally speaking, I am 'wasting my time,' but I cannot refrain. Read hastily, despairingly, and while I read Mill's *Theism* a great light seems to break in upon me. Suddenly I seem to see."

Those who have read Mill's little book will understand me. The old utilitarian moralist explained Christianity in those pages as the doctrine of a *suffering* God—a universal will for good which has not yet conquered in existence—an Ormuzd in a struggle not yet ended with Ahriman, but Ormuzd can conquer, if we human beings will help him to do so, if we will adhere to him in faith, in obedience to conscience, in prayer. . .

To this suffering God of Mill's I prayed one day in January, 1894. Only a short invocation: "Oh, Lord, thou who art behind all things . . ." but the first real prayer since my childhood.

## *BETWEEN TWO MAGNETS*

*" And no man that drinketh the old wine will straightway drink of the new for he saith, ' the old is better.' "*

### I

In the spring if 1894 I came into close relationship with two men who seemed to have been sent out from the two opposite poles of existence. Carl Ewald[1] was the one, Mogens Ballin the other.

If I were briefly to sum up the characters of these two men I would say that Carl Ewald represented man, and Mogens Ballin represented God. Carl Ewald was one of the most consistent humanists I have ever known—taking the idea of humanism in its deepest sense : faith in man as the highest being. To him, the convinced Darwinist, nature student and nature lover, J. P. Jacobsen's words were true : " There is no God, and man is his prophet." He was too strong and too courageous to acclaim the motto of the weak and timid ; theory is one thing, practice is another. To him atheism was true, and he based his life on it. It often hurt, but then he hardened himself, set his teeth and endured the pain.

[1]Ewald (Carl), b. 1856—d. 1908. Beginning as a teacher, he afterwards left that profession for journalism, which in turn led him to literature. He is at the present time perhaps best known through his Nature stories, which are both instructive and entertaining. Some of them, such as *The Queen Bee*, have been translated into English and published by Gyldendal. Amongst Ewald's other works should be mentioned his historical novels : *Uncrowned Queens*, in which he has related the lives of some of the morganatic consorts of Danish kings, and given a vivid description of the times they lived in, emphasising the most repellent features of the characters he has portrayed.

The conditions of life were not otherwise, and fortunately, after rain there was always sunshine.

Carl Ewald took atheism seriously and he took the autonomy of conscience seriously. Nietzsche had confirmed him in the faith by which he was already living, that there are herd men and supermen—that herd men have to keep their place within the bounds of the civic moral standard, but that the home of the superman is in the land beyond good and evil. From the *Linden Branch* to *My Big Girl* he proclaimed one doctrine—the doctrine which he acknowledged himself and by which he lived : the rights of life, the rights of the heart, the rights of the hot blood to happiness, the right of the strong hand to take what it could hold and keep. These were the guiding principles by which Carl Ewald lived, and life was by no means dull in his company. When I made his acquaintance he had just begun to write his Nature stories. When he had finished one of them—and Ewald was a rapid writer—the manuscript was taken to the publishers, who generally paid him fifty kroner, sometimes more. Fortified with this money, Carl Ewald sallied forth to enjoy himself. In his lordly manner he generally invited friends to join him ; often my wife and myself, or me alone. The hotel overlooking the Sound at Skodsborg was a favourite resort on these occasions—there we would sit on the balcony, where dinner was served with all the refinements of flowers at each cover, of champagne with the chickens and big cigars with the coffee. We drove home by the road along the coast on the light summer evenings—Ewald in the highest spirits and singing songs he had composed himself. I still remember some lines of one of them : " I may be an old man of thirty-six, but all the same. . ."

In contrast to Ewald and his paganism, Mogens Ballin now came as the new disciple and recent convert to the oldest form of Christianity.

When the history of Catholicism in Denmark comes

to be written a new section will have to begin with Mogens Ballin. Since the time when the Constitutional Law gave the Danish people religious freedom in 1849 the Catholic Church had slowly added to the number of her adherents in Denmark. Important conversions had taken place, but the converts were either believing Lutherans, mostly ministers, for whom the path to Rome had been smoothed by Grundtvig, or they were members of the nobility, who during continental travel had found their way into a Catholic church and stayed there. Mogens Ballin threw a bridge across from the young Danish *intelligentsia*, represented by *Politiken* and its followers, to old Roman Christianity. He made it acceptable for young Danes to become Catholics.

He could do this because he had himself issued from Radicalism—and from its very core : Jewish Radicalism. As the only son, and only child, of wealthy parents, he had when quite young gone to Paris to study art. It was into the Paris of symbolism that he fell in 1891 when only twenty years old. With all the enthusiasm of his youth and the ardour of his race he joined himself to the newest of the new ; he was one of the happiest among the happy, cosmopolitan and youthful crowd of the Boulevard Saint Michel and the Closerie des Lilas. But he did not confine himself to drawing and painting ; he also read and thought. Sâr Péladan made an impression upon him ; he read Swedenborg, and one day he saw the greatest of the sons of Israel. He met his great Kinsman from Nazareth and felt with unspeakable awe that this was flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood. The young Israelite stood trembling and reverent before the Son of Mary and fell at His feet saying like Cephas and Thomas : " My Lord and my God !"

Mogens Ballin's conversion was no long or complicated proceeding. The Dutch painter, Jan Verkade, only a few years older, had played an important part in it. The two young men had met at the house of the painter,

Gauguin, whose wife was a Dane. Later, the Dutch artist met the young Dane at a students' ball at the "Bullier." Ballin was sitting alone on a bench and watching the dancing of the Cancan. "Are you enjoying this?" Verkade asked. Ballin answered, "It bores me. It all seems so stupid." Verkade then told him about his plans for the summer; he was going with the French painter, Sérusier to Brittany to paint there. "Take me with you," Ballin begged of him, and his request was granted.

The three artists, then, Ballin, Verkade and Sérusier, spent a summer together in Brittany. First at Pont-Aven, then at Huelgoat, finally in Pouldre. In the autumn of 1891 Ballin returned to Copenhagen. I saw him at the studio of his friend, Clément, one day in the following February—very talkative, his fingers yellow from cigarette-making, expounding symbolism, Rosicrucianism and the doctrines of Swedenborg; displaying drawings by Forain, posters by Chéret; wallpapers, pottery, Japanese colour-prints, photographs of Egyptian fabrics. In the studio there was a Madonna by himself, "three white maidens" by Clément. "When you see something that looks quite mad," he said to me, "you can be certain it's my stuff. If there is still some sense in it it's by Clément!" He gave me the impression of a merry and good-looking boy who has set himself the aim of shocking respectable citizens, besides that of being a young man of means, able to indulge his taste in all the glories of ancient and modern culture.

Soon after this he went back to Paris, and—with Verkade—again to Brittany. He lived first at Saint Nolff near Vannes, afterwards at Auray. Here it was that the event occurred which became decisive for him. He happened to read *The Imitation of Christ* of Thomas à Kempis. The last time I saw Mogens Ballin—it was on the Rhine in the summer of 1913—he showed me an old, worn copy of that immortal book; on the fly-leaf he

had written: " This book was given to me in Brittany in 1892. I read it. It converted me."

The *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas à Kempis, then, was the source of that spring which Mogens Ballin found one day—a spring like so many of those running near the small chapels by the wayside in Brittany. He had tasted the champagne of life in Paris, the absinthe of Bohemia, the liqueurs of symbolism—here, for the first time, he tasted refreshing and cooling water. And when he had drunk of it he was another man—was no longer himself—or, rather, was but now himself.

" He that followeth me walketh not in darkness." Thus does the Augustinian friar begin his book.

" It is vanity to seek perishing riches and to trust in them.

" Vanity, also, it is, to court honours and to lift up one's self on high.

" Vanity is it to follow the desire of the flesh ; and to desire that, for which hereafter there must be a heavy penalty.

" Vanity is it to wish a long life, and take but little pains about a good life.

" Vanity is it to attend only to the present life, and not to look forward to the things that are to come.

" It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to be hasting thither where endless joy abideth.

" Oftentimes call to mind the proverb : ' The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.'

" Study therefore to wean thy heart from love of visible things, and to betake thee to the things unseen ; for they that follow the pleasure of their senses sully their conscience and lose the grace of God."

Perhaps there are some—in the northern countries of Europe—who will say that in this the young Israelite had not met Christianity—this was not the Gospel. In

any case, it was that which has for nearly two thousand years been considered as such—it was Catholicism—and in the sincerity of his heart, the simplicity of his conscience, Mogens Ballin found that Catholicism was right. It *was* vanity to seek for riches—as his family and his kindred were doing in Denmark. It *was* vanity to seek honour and fame—as young poets and artists were doing in Paris and Copenhagen. It *was* vanity to love the beauty that is fair to-day and withered to-morrow, and when death comes all that is left is only a drawer with faded flowers and old ribbons, and one goes into eternity without other luggage than a jar filled with sentimental "*pot-pourri.*" Verlaine was right when he sang, "*Et quand la mort viendra, que reste-t-il ?*"

Mogens Ballin, too, had read Verlaine—as we had—and yet in a way different from ours, not for æsthetic enjoyment, or not only for that, but also in practical imitation. *Sagesse* completed for Mogens Ballin what *The Imitation of Christ* had begun, for the Bohemian of the Café Voltaire pointed straight to the door of the Catholic Church :

*Voici, laisse aller l'ignorance indécise*
*De ton cœur vers les bras ouverts de mon Eglise,*
*Comme la guêpe vole au lys épanoui.*

Not a refined "spiritual" Christianity, but a humble stepping into the Church, hat in hand, like a peasant going into a cathedral. And there in the old cathedral, over there, beneath the glass mosaics of the flaming windows—there is the confessional, the simple, truthful, quiet refuge of the penitent confessing his sins, with the cold, perforated brass lattice, but behind the lattice a warm and living heart :

*Approche-toi de mon oreille. Epanches-y*
*L'humiliation d'une brave franchise,*
*Dis-moi tout sans un mot d'orgueil ou de reprise,*
*Et m'offre le bouquet d'un repentir choisi.*

Tell everything—there was nothing new in that to a young Bohemian of the year 1892 (and is there for a young Bohemian of the present day?) Many and detailed are the confessions made at the marble-topped tables of cafés, when the last electric light is burning over the talk of two friends in the last illuminated corner of a big restaurant. Many and undisguised are the confessions made on the muddy roads on wet winter nights, when friends keep on seeing each other home and will not part, each to go home to his own loneliness. "Tell everything"—yes, but without boasting of one's sin, without preening oneself on one's adventures—telling it in whispers and with remorse and shame through a lattice to a man whose white profile shines so sternly in the gloom of the confessional—a man who never walked in darkness, and whose hands never plucked the roses of the world? "Tell everything"—not like a haughty sinner, but like a poor criminal—bending one's head in confession—and bending it under the pardon, under the lifted hand of a priest, under the words, *Ego te absolvo . . .*

Bending the head—and only raising it again to look up at the altar in the chancel of the church—to where the red glowing lamp burns so quietly and so yearningly, where the white linen cloth is spread over the altar rails. where that Bread is broken which only those may eat who will kneel before It and worship It, because It is God:

*Puis franchement et simplement viens à ma Table —*
*Pour y participer au Vin qui désaltère,*
*Au Pain sans qui la vie est une trahison.*

With bent head and folded hands to go up to the Table and receive the Bread, "without which life is a betrayal," Mogens Ballin determined to do this. Verkade had already become a Catholic; on August 26th, 1892, in the church in Saint Nolff, he abjured the Calvinistic

heresy to which he belonged by birth. Shortly after he and Ballin went to Florence. There, in Dante's *caro San Giovanni*, on January 6th, 1893, the young Jew received baptism, and in baptism the Christian name of Francesco. Bishop Donati baptised him, Jan Verkade was his godfather.

As the newly baptised Francesco, still glowing with the fire of grace, Mogens Ballin returned to Copenhagen.

## II

One day in the autumn of 1893 my door-bell rang. I opened the door myself; Mogens Ballin stood before me. My first impression of him—when I met him in Clément's studio—had not been favourable, and I therefore asked rudely: "Good morning—what do you want?" "To pay you a visit," Ballin answered cheerfully, and walked across the threshold. He had read my book, *The Tree of Life*, and had thought so much about it that he had to discuss it with me.

All who knew Mogens Ballin know what a *causeur* he was. Even if he had not been this the things he said were worth listening to. Unfortunately I only made notes of a few points of our first talk, for instance these: "All art that does not describe the absolute is blasphemous or useless." "Outside Catholicism there is no firm foundation, nothing but perdition." "People usually say, 'If we had religion we would be different and not sin.' To this Pascal answers, 'Stop sinning, and you will have religion.' And that is the truth."

On my bookshelves he found many of the French neo-Catholic authors—"But two of them are missing, perhaps the two greatest," he said. Shortly after he brought me *Le Désespéré* and *Sueur de Sang* by Léon Bloy, and *L'Homme* by Ernest Hello.

Although I did not share in the dogmatic premisses of

Léon Bloy, he pleased me, regarded purely as a type ; he became a sort of ideal for me, a personal model. His Christianity was of a proud, agitated character ; his Christ was a judge, a destroyer, a scourge of God, a *Messias-Attila*. One sentence of Bloy struck home in me - " Every real writer is a judge."

In a very high degree I felt called upon to judge—myself as well as others. This call was further confirmed by reading Hello.

One of the mightiest forces in the Breton thinker's soul was that of hate. Ernest Hello was a Boanerges, a " son of thunder," who prayed to God that fire might fall from heaven and consume the cities of the ungodly. And—evil as I was—I could be approached on the side of hate, but not of love. My conversion began with my hating. I could not love anyone but myself. The misfortune in which I was living showed me that something must be wrong, that I must have made a mistake in my calculations. My dear self made moan, this was not the kind of life I had imagined ! When the thermometer was at eight below zero in the morning, and one knelt before the stove to clean it out, red ashes and grey ashes and big lumps of burnt-up stone that made one poet's fingers dusty and black, and cracked them till they bled, because the skin was chapped with the cold, and one knew that there were still two other stoves to be cleaned and heated—then one understood very thoroughly that emancipation was a lie and deceit. When other, still more menial work had to be done, under the watching eyes of the neighbours, who enjoyed seeing " the author " engaged in the ignominious task of carrying down buckets to the ash-bin, then it became unmistakably clear that free-thought was not exactly the surest path to the amenities of life. Then one felt so thoroughly cheated and defrauded (because one had never cared for a life of duty, of the simple, faithful performance of duties). When, therefore, one could at last sit down at the writing-table as editor of

*The Tower*—ah, then one eagerly seized the stinging whip and smarting scourge of Hello and swung it with the hands which had been subjected to such indignities over the shoulders of *those* on whom one laid the blame of one's misfortunes.

I knew them, the types that Hello described with a pen that stung and burnt like caustic acid. I had sat at Radical dinner parties and heard " le Médiocre " expound his wisdom—" the mediocre maintains that both good and evil are to be found everywhere, and that above all one must not be categorical in one's judgment. If you maintain very strongly that something is true, says the mediocre, you are conceited. He is himself at the same time modest and haughty, reverent before Voltaire " (before Georg Brandes, as I understood it), " but a rebel against the Church. . . The mediocre does not believe in the devil ; he regrets that the Christian religion possesses dogmas ; he would be better pleased if it only taught morals. If you tell him that the morals follow from the dogmas, like conclusions from a principle, he answers that now you are really exaggerating. . . The mediocre is falsely modest, considers his reason superior to divine truth, but at the same time he ranks it lower than that of Voltaire. He places himself lower than the commonest fools of the eighteenth century, but in the same breath he mocks at Saint Theresa."

In Denmark the mediocre did not mock at Saint Theresa, for the good reason that he did not know her. He was content to look down on religion in general as " a superseded standpoint " and at the same time to grovel before *Politiken.*

By the side of the mediocre there was the superior person, he who kept to what could be handled, and who shrugged his shoulders at poetry, art, religion, all of them different varieties of " dreaming." " The eighteenth century," wrote Hello (and I added ' Brandesianism '), " has bequeathed to us the habit of connecting the idea

of *a dreamer* with the conception of a man who believes in the invisible and reckons with it. It has not been noticed that dreams only exist where there is illusion, and that illusion is only found in those who deny the invisible. He who believes only in what he can see allows himself to be deceived. Illusion consists in taking the shadow for reality, and reality for the shadow. A dreamer is one who never awakens—who never turns to uncreated light—who lives continually and exclusively in the land of shadows."

There—take that compliment, you practical free-thinkers, who look down on me as a dreamer! It is you who are the dreamers, let me tell you!

But I turned the sword against myself and against the whole of the young generation to which I belonged, and which was now approaching manhood, when I repeated and adopted what Hello had written about "*la passion du malheur*," "the love of unhappiness." "There are certain thoughts," wrote the philosopher of Kéroman, "which have poisoned the wells of life of humanity. One of these thoughts is that evil is not dull, but that it is even a remedy against dulness. This unreasonable delusion is extremely common, even amongst honest folk. They believe that their life would be more interesting, more varied, that it would be freeer, if evil were more intermingled with good. They refrain from evil out of duty, but with a feeling of privation. In turning their backs on evil they leave something of their heart behind; they do not altogether renounce it. They do not know how empty evil is, nor how dull; they have no horror of it. A certain inclination to that which leads to a fall—a certain sense of want because of fear of touching the forbidden fruit—a certain cleavage of the soul between good and evil—a vague, perhaps, and unconscious feeling that poetry departs in the company of sin and misfortune—such thoughts as these creep in even to those who wish to be good and pure . . . The reason of this is that one

does not know completely enough, not unreservedly enough, not practically enough, that there is absolute *unity* between the true, the good and the beautiful. One does not know how repulsively hideous all that is which is outside the pure truth. People believe that one ought to refrain from happiness out of virtue, because happiness is dangerous. They do not know that out of virtue one ought to shun unhappiness because unhappiness is dangerous."

This was Ernest Hello's masterpiece and that which made the deepest impression upon me. I was an egoist, and Hello particularly appealed to egoism. "Man does not love himself," he asserted; "man has no love for himself. If he had any love for himself he would hate evil; hate all that which hinders him in reaching the goal, all that which is hostile to his need of joy and light. Man would hate *error*. But man has no love for himself —hence he makes a covenant with his enemy."

Now came the proof of experience that we really had sold ourselves to the devil—only we did not know it, because we were poor witless fools.

"The devil makes his dupes believe that it is more beautiful, more gallant, more independent to take poison than to eat bread, and while his miserable victims writhe in their death agony he carries his irony and his malice so far as to fill them with contempt for all who have remained faithful to eternal reason and everlasting love—for all who have listened to the Word, who have understood, believed and accepted the Bread which the Father offers his children.

Here the light of the truth was so strong that no resistance was possible. Here the whited sepulchres of emancipation were opened, and a relentless hand showed, as on the fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa, what there was inside them: corruption and dead bones, unhappiness, grief, tears and misery. One winter night, after finishing my work with Hello, I stood at the window of my room

behind Söndermarken and looked out at the dark, starless night, feeling the icy waters of despair rising up in my heart. After *The Tree of Life* I had written the little book *Homesickness*. It had fallen flat. A visit to my publisher had made me feel how difficult, precarious and foolhardy my position was. As editor of *The Tower* I was competing against his review, *Tilskueren*; he told me so. The plans for new books which I put before him did not interest him; he smiled politely but with indifference. He flatly refused a request for a sum on account, that favourite resource of Danish authors!

Here I was, then, at midnight in my chilly room in a flat for which I could not pay. A couple of rooms away my wife and son were lying asleep; I could not feed and clothe them. My wife had taken the child into her own bed to keep him warm, and I had covered them with everything we possessed of rugs and coats. It was a creaking hard frost, and there were only a few shovels of coals left in the cellar. I plunged my hand into my pocket to find out whether I had any matches—one morning all our match-boxes had been empty, so that we could not light the gas and make tea. We did not possess a farthing with which to buy matches, and we could not borrow from our hostile landlord. On that morning we were rescued by Mogens Ballin paying us an early visit. He had matches and drank tea with us without any suspicion of the depths of misery from which he had saved us.

I looked back over the ten years which had passed since that morning when, in my youth and overweening spirits, I had accepted the futility of life. I thought then that I had found the philosopher's stone—and it certainly was a stone that had been given me—"stones for bread." "By their fruits ye shall know them. Can a good tree bear evil fruit?"

Suddenly I bent my knees and rested my head on the window-sill. Kneeling before the frozen window-pane, I prayed the old prayer for daily bread.

## III

"Yes, you can fold your hands," said Carl Ewald a day or two later, "but you cannot clench them!" And lifting a clenched fist, he gave me a mocking look.

That spring of 1894 was to be a remarkable one. Like the cloth that Peter saw being lowered from heaven, it was filled with creatures both clean and unclean.

Jan Verkade arrived in March on a visit to his friend and godson, Mogens Ballin. The fair-haired young Dutchman with the dark-blue eyes and the big fair beard soon became a favourite wherever he went. An exhibition of his pictures, visited equally by radical Jews, symbolistic young ladies and Catholic countesses, made him popular in Copenhagen. Whether he was in the drawing-rooms of the wives of wealthy merchants or in the garrets of young poets, he was always the same—gay, friendly, complacent to everybody, but undaunted in his opinions. He had a pleasant voice and sang, now French songs learnt in Brittany, now a Gregorian *Salve Regina*. Even that incorrigible heathen, Carl Ewald, succumbed to his charm and asked him to his house.

Verkade also came to see me a few times. I remember his first visit. It was on Palm Sunday, and he came in holding in his hand a twig of box which he had received at the consecration of palms at St. Ansgar's church. "*Cela vous portera bonheur*," he said, and gave it to me. Probably at his own and Ballin's suggestion I went to the church above named on the following Good Friday—"but came out again unsatisfied"—out to the warm spring sunshine, went out to the water, enjoying the beauty of the blue sea and the pleasure of being alone. In the afternoon of the same day I went out to Lyngby with my wife to see the Stuckenbergs, who were now living there, opposite the Sorgenfri Wood.[1] I had not seen

[1] Sans-Souci, a small royal residence.

much of them since the first start of *The Tower*. Viggo did not care for the circle in which I was now living, neither Ewald and that which he represented, nor Ballin and that for which he stood. He said sneeringly of a picture of Saint Francis of Assisi which Ballin had given him, "It has been mislaid, it must have ascended into heaven!" He was getting through the crisis in which he had found himself and was again, more deeply than ever before, and for ever, ready to accept life as he found it. It was near the end of March; crocuses were flowering in his garden, gnats were swarming above the gooseberry bushes. We went for a long walk beside willow-hedges with "palms," between green rye-fields in the evening sun and evening peace. "For me there is nothing but this," said Stuckenberg. We felt that we were parting for ever that night.

> The path of life that led us far apart,
> led him thither, me hither,
> each to his own nook;
> time has hardened him
> and made him dreamless,
> to me it taught the speech
> and the deep thoughts of dreams obscure.

On the following day, Easter Eve, I was present at the varnishing day of the Independent Exhibition. Skovgaard's[1] picture, "Christ in the kingdom of the dead"

[1]Skovgaard (Joakim), b. 1856. A son of the Danish painter, P. C. T. Skovgaard. Exhibited his first pictures in 1878. Studied the art of ancient Greece in Italy, also early Italian art, from which he learnt simplicity and emphasis. Beginning as a landscape painter, he afterwards turned to figure painting, and thence to the interpretation of Biblical subjects, in which he has shown both deep feeling and executive power. He has also treated his themes in a modern spirit and in a personal manner, reaching his subject directly without any intervening tradition, which has not been seen since the time of Rembrandt, while at the same time showing so complete a mastery of the technical side of his art that he was naturally chosen to carry out the work of the decoration of Viborg Cathedral in Jutland. In this he may be said to have reached the climax of his art. It is his greatest work, and will carry his name far beyond the shores of his own country.

was the event of the exhibition ; Ballin was enthusiastic and wrote a long article about it in *The Tower*. I saw Edvard Brandes standing before the huge canvas ; his keen, pale face looked so bewildered before the great Christ. His intelligence failed him here—and he felt it.

As for myself, notwithstanding the prayer uttered on that night of hopelessness, I was but negatively a Christian. I was the ally of Hello and Bloy, of Ballin and Verkade, in their criticism of free-thought, but my positive religious sense was far wider and vaguer than their firmly defined Catholicism. At a sacred concert given at the church of Our Lady I heard Bach's Passion Music of St. John, and was impressed by the dead silence after the words, " *Es ist vollbracht.*" The Lutheran faith of my fathers, the hymns of my childhood became very real and present to me. I had a confidence, as unreasoned as it was ineradicable, in a Power that ruled everything, and in whose hands I felt myself held. The diary of March 31st contains this note : " Economic ruin threatens me, but I fear nothing ; I trust in a new and better life." A day or two later : " I have a strange feeling of freedom, of buoyancy—as if I were a balloon, presently to soar above the world around it."

One evening, after a visit from Verkade and Ballin, when the two young artists had talked about their life in France and Italy, about Florence, Fiesole, Assisi and Siena, I had wailed despondently, " Shall I never behold the blue mountains, never stand before Duccio's pictures on a golden ground ? Ah, Siena, Siena !" The next morning I saw from the window in the kitchen where I was making tea a train gliding across the verdant country of spring towards Roskilde, the white steam trailing after it, and in the same instant I knew that soon I would also be setting out to see all that those others had seen and that was waiting for me beyond the horizon. (But I did not know that out of that cry for Siena would come a sojourn of three years in the city of Saint Catherine.)

Then came ruin, which led to a decision, to deliverance. One sunny morning in April we left our flat. The furniture dealer took back the oak table, around which so many friends had so often gathered ; the yellow oak sideboard on which my wife on so many a night had lit the candles to make the room look festive; the big mirror in the sitting-room, which had reflected our faces during so many happy as well as so many terrible hours, which had for three years witnessed the life of two human beings. was taken down. It reflected for a moment the large poplars, the blue sky, the white clouds, then it was turned over and reflected nothing more. I went through the empty rooms ; there was nothing in them but sunshine and the echo of my footsteps. The window of the sitting-room was open to the balcony. There my little son, who was now two years old, had so often sat in his small chair and peeped out between the railings ; one day I had made a drawing of his charming little silhouette in his white frock, his wide-brimmed hat and his brown coat, which was not in the least pretty, but which he particularly cherished.

Gone was all that we had lived through, all that we had suffered in these rooms, and more than that was gone—my youth was over—maturity was beginning.

## IV

With my wife and child I again fled to Svendborg, to the old home, ever hospitable, ever open. It was in the beginning of April and in happy wonder I found myself suddenly carried into a "world of peace, freedom and happiness, the rooms festively adorned with flowers, the garden gay in its bright vernal green, and filled with the fluty music of the starlings." Some words from the New Testament involuntarily came into my mind, "He delivered us from the powers of darkness and set us in the kingdom of His beloved son." Here, at home, with

my good mother, my kind uncle, my sweet sisters, was purity and peace everywhere. With my young brother I went into the old woods of my childhood's days, to the grass eyots, the "haunted" woods, the hills, the meadows, and the white anemones were still in bloom. In the garden the red tulips were standing in stiff and stately rows, the sun was shining, the starlings were whistling and my father was going about patting down the newly-sown beds.

After all the literature in Copenhagen, the Bohemian life and the parties in honour of Verkade (and there had been many of them!) this was a sudden transition to a simple and natural life, as nourishing as milk.

I began to write poetry again, and I began again to philosophise. I was no longer being suffocated in the empty air-bell of despair—my soul breathed freely and calmly. When pressure ceases the counter pressure ceases too; now that the struggle for existence was no longer weighing me to the ground my religious aspirations assumed less definite forms, and I had thoughts of striking a cheaper bargain than that of actually becoming a Catholic. In a series of verses I found expression for the religious feelings engendered by the sunny days of spring—"sunshine on the water like white flowers, flowers amongst light-green trees. In the fragrance and singing and sunshine I feel that God is near." "All the birds are singing the praises of spring to God." "It was in the light woods of spring that I found my God." Writing in *Politiken*, Edvard Brandes justly remarked about these verses, when they appeared in *The Tower*, under the title of "The Gospel of Spring," that we could no doubt all join in that kind of clericalism.

It was as though I had already forgotten the stern lesson which the reality and the rigours of winter had taught me—forgotten the nights of despair, when I thought I had seen the very faces of Satan and his angels—*teterrimas facies dæmonum*—as I had cried then in my horror and need. They were forgotten now, those

terrible demoniac faces, and the diary says: "In the meadows" (a wood near Svendborg) "with my wife. The sun was warm as on a summer day. A young beech-wood full of anemones, a Milky Way of white flower stars, a white loveliness; heaven cannot be more beautiful! We sat perfectly still on two mossy stones. The wood-pigeons were cooing, the blackbirds singing, on long, fluty notes, the titmice twittering underneath them in an unending sea of sound, above which the notes of the other birds winged their flight. We looked out over a big marsh full of yellow marigolds and scattered, light-green bushes. Furthest away was the lofty brow of the reddening bechwood, looking as though wrapped in a haze of red buds. Oh, Nature, Nature—great, beautiful and pure, thou, my God, whom I will never deny! Oh love, love, the great, devoted love of my dear wife!" (April 17).

Later, same day: "I feel so infinitely far removed from all despisers of Nature and from all woman haters. For joy is the highest to which man can attain. The wicked are not happy. Joy is the perception of the infinite, the eternal."

I was not exactly on the way to Rome; the words about "despisers of Nature" and "woman haters" were even directly aimed at Mogens Ballin, who during a talk had enthusiastically quoted to me the abusive words about women uttered by the greatest misogynist amongst the Fathers of the Church, in which he called woman "a vessel of impurity and an ally of Satan." There had been times in my life when I would not have protested against the judgments of Tertullian, in which I also saw woman as "Lilith gliding through the groves of Eden in the form of a serpent." But here in the woods and the spring sunshine, with my dear one in summery white at my side, far away from exciting carousals and ignominious poverty, the great love which had once seized me and held me fast, the love between man and woman, was born again in my heart.

Thoughts of eternity could only with difficulty grow in the warm soil of the spring woods. One Sunday in April I was present at a service in the small Catholic church in Svendborg, on which occasion the sermon was preached by none less than the Bishop and Vicar Apostolic from Copenhagen. The diary records: "In the evening from eight to nine, a Catholic festivity." (There had been a first communion in the morning.) "Soprano: Ave Maria; pure child faces framed in white veils. This purity, and our Copenhagen corruption! But the ceremonies, indulgences (!), the incomprehensible Latin repelled me. And the Bishop's words, "Our true goal is not here below," aroused a Goethean protest in me. Yet during the sermon I understood that the expression, "The Word became flesh," means: the Word of God, which is the *law of conscience*, became human reality in Jesus."

As in earlier summer holidays, I had again taken out Goethe and I read him, Schiller and Herder, trying with their help to construct for myself a reasonable humanistic religion. "Walked in the garden in the evening; moon-grey, foggy—violent dance music somewhere—the note of a bird of passage above me. I felt that the truth could only be found in a religion which embraced and explained the whole of Nature. My homesickness, my longing, desire, sensuality—everything! 'Only those who seek God find Him,' it is said. And those who have not sought Him? A Goethe, a Flaubert?"

Thus, day after day, week after week, did I tack before the fair or contrary winds of changing thoughts. "Has the doctrine of the atoning death of Christ been taught by Christ Himself?" "Are not the rationalists right when they assert the whole of the life of Christ to be legendary and point out that it is a sun myth? Like the Indian Krishna, Christ was born on the 25th of December—the winter solstice—in the zodiacal sign of *the Virgin*—was heralded by a star—followed by the twelve animal

signs (cfr. the symbols of the Evangelists: ox, lion, eagle). Like the sun he awakens dead Nature to new life (Lazarus), is persecuted, slain, buried and rises again at Easter—with Nature."

"In order to solve these doubts I took out the Bible and read the New Testament. 'He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life,' says the Gospel of St. John. Compare Goethe's words to Eckermann about the meagre happiness of his life,—Flaubert's despairing letters—Turgenieff's pessimism—Zola's dread of death (in the journal of the Goncourts)—all the modern melancholy." (April 15).

"I study and formulate the Johannine doctrine. 'In the Word was life, and the life was the light of men.' God is the Creator from the beginning, and the maintainer, by whom and in whom all things are, live and develop. Life is that light which He has sent to guide mankind—that which harms and hinders life is evil; that which sustains and helps it on is good. Sin is the enemy of life—on that point science and Christianity can agree." (April 16). The organ for good in man is seen to be, not conscience, but "the soul," an indefinite idea, which, with equal vagueness, is defined as "the will to God," i.e. to beauty, truth and love." "Sin is a falling away from the will to God. It is sin against the soul."

In spite of all Brandesianism, my consciousness of sin was not dead. The diary says: "He who serves truth, serves God. He who serves beauty serves God. He who serves the good serves God. But the only way to the highest truth, the highest beauty, the highest good is through Christ. Christ is that 'more light' for which Goethe begged at the hour of his death, and which now shows me my sins—all my unreliability, uncertainty, vacillating lack of independence, sensuality, selfishness, unkindness—all the evil that lies upon my soul like a heavy crust of black memories. Ah, to be delivered from it—to become shining and new!"

But the thought of the atoning death of Christ was remote. "The death of Christ," says the diary, "has been for the salvation of mankind what every sacrifice for an ideal cause is—a sign that awakens, a seal that confirms (St. John xi, 50-52). St. John xii, 24, distinctly says this: 'Dying for the sake of the doctrine is a necessary condition for its diffusion, and for the salvation of mankind by means of it.' It is also necessary for Christ's own eternal life in the soul of mankind, i.e. in God. Christ felt this soul of humanity in Himself as that which had sent Him forth (St. John xii, 49). St. John (xiv, 3, and xiv, 19) evidently speaks of Christ's second coming in the souls of men, of His purely spiritual presence among the faithful ('I live and ye shall live.') In St. John xiv, 26, conscience is made equal to the Holy Ghost. St. John xv, 1 and 2: The Father is the God of development, the Lord of adjustment. The Christian is the highest form of humanity. To xvi, 27, must be added: 'and that my words are truth for light unto life, for beatitude—here, and eternal life—hereafter'; xvii, 17: 'Truth sanctifies'; xx, 31: 'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing you may have life in His name."

I was again, as when I was a boy, plunging into theology and exegesis on my own account. The diary concludes: "April 16, 11 p.m. This seems to me to be the fundamental law and final doctrine of Johannine Christianity: *to believe that Jesus is God, and therefore to act upon His words as upon a divine law, for the attainment of everlasting life*. This agrees with the continual assertion that God loves those who obey Jesus. For *to be loved by God* is everlasting blessedness. Amen."

This thought is further elaborated under the heading "Eureka." "In consequence of the Fall the soul of man, detached from God, can only contemplate Him under the form of Nature. The will of man is no longer the will of God—therefore Nature seems to be evil or

indifferent to what is human. Here the scientific conception of the world (the realm of necessity) finds its place; it is a limited and imperfect conception of the deity, and is conditioned by the Fall. The highest standpoint of heathenism is attained through the progressive social, moral and religious adjustment to Nature. And now God reveals Himself directly, through Christ, in order to bring back the souls of men. The adjustment to God is achieved in following Christ." "At the Fall of man the world beyond was changed into the world we now see, the creatures of which are symbols of the world of God—symbols of which science studies the horizontal connection while poetry has a presentiment of their vertical sense" (April 17).

The religion I was in this way constructing for myself —on the way from atheism, as at one time on the way to free-thought—is not particularly orthodox: there is something of Jacob Boehme in it—I read Martensen's book about the visionary shoemaker—there is Tolstoi (*What is my Faith?*)—finally, there is Kant's doctrine on phenomena and the *Ding an sich*. Instead of an "Either-or" I seek a "Both-and" as comprehensive as possible. "Hello and Goethe agree more than one would think," the diary says. "They both detest *la passion du malheur*, they both consider life sacred (but not as a fortuitous reality); they honour Christ as a revelation of God." From Schiller words like these are quoted: "To be perfect citizens in the world of Nature, yet without becoming its slaves and without forfeiting our birthright in the intelligible world"—and these, from the Essay on Tragic Art: "Even discontent with fate falls away and is lost in the presentiment, or rather in a distinct consciousness, of a teleological connection of things, an exalted ordering of everything by a beneficent will." To this Schillerian harmony of life and its trusting faith in Providence I could willingly confess.

I was steering, then, in the direction of a Protestant

humanism. After a second visit to the Catholic church there is this note : " The Mass was pleasing, regarded as a drama, but is absolutely incapable of producing a morally *religious* effect. What Hettner says of the romanticists is also true of modern Catholics : ' They do not allow their piety to disturb their worldliness, their spiritual asceticism does not interfere with their love of enjoyment.' In the time of romanticism—in Germany—the libertinage of Schlegel's *Lucinde* had destroyed the souls of men and rendered them incapable of *self-redemption.* Therefore they looked for ' the faith that makes good works superfluous ' (Hettner). In Denmark, Brandesianism—which is individualism, egoism, romanticism—has done the work of the Schlegel brothers. They sowed the gospel of the flesh—now they are reaping Catholicism. As for me, I am and will remain a Protestant."

The rejection of Catholicism here seems to be written in the most unmistakable terms. " Modern naturalism," the diary goes on philosophising " must be transformed into religious humanism. Against the moral fantastics of Brandesianism we must pit Goethe's words : ' *Nur das Gesetz kann uns die Freiheit geben.*' "

The diary contains further notes of attempts at spiritual grafting—for instance, I cross-breed Baudelaire and Schiller. " What the former calls *original sin* the latter calls ' real Nature ' ; what the latter calls ' true Nature,' the former calls *grace.* The ideal for both of them is a purification of the natural." I read again my old favourite book, Goldschmidt's *Nemesis* and quote from it : " We do not exist for the sake of happiness or for a life of ease. Man exists that he may know order and put himself in order." From Herder is quoted : " The first germ of freedom is the feeling that one is bound and with what bonds." " For," the thought continues independently, " freedom can only be achieved through adherence to *order.* The truth shall make you free," not the revolt of the Radicals against order. This Goethe also asserts in

*Die Geheimnisse*—only he who conquers himself and allies himself with the world order delivers himself from *the power that binds all.* " The most sincere uprightness is religion," says Herder. But right action cannot take place without true knowledge of the world order. " No metaphysics, no morals " (Schopenhauer). Spinoza also asserts this. In his twenty-first letter he says that it is " necessary for the salvation of souls " to know " that eternal Son of God, who is eternal divine wisdom and who has revealed and realised himself in all things, above all in the spirit and mind of man, most excellently in Jesus Christ. For without this wisdom no one can attain to salvation, for this alone teaches what is true and false, good and evil." Herder agrees with this when he writes (" *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* "): " Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. The deeper, the purer, the diviner our knowledge is, the purer, diviner and more general is our action, and consequently the freer is our freedom. If the light of God shines for us in all things, we are transformed in His image from slaves to kings, and obtain what the philosopher sought—a point in ourselves from which we can conquer the world ; a point outside the world from which we can move it. We are then on higher ground and on an equality with all things ; we move in the focus of God's creation, in the flame of all thought and feeling, in love, which is the highest reason and the purest will. God then speaks to thee, God acts upon thee through all noble human beings who were His organs, and above all through the organ of organs, His only-begotten One."

" In these words everything is said—for me too," the diarist concludes his notes for that day.

## V

I continued, then, to be eagerly engaged in seeking the philosopher's stone. Meanwhile the need of earning

daily bread was becoming urgent. My parents and my uncle noticed with anxiety my strangely untroubled way of living for a day at a time, absorbed in my thoughts, quite aimlessly, from the point of view of honest citizens. I was in my twenty-eighth year, I had a wife and child, I could not stay in Svendborg indefinitely, being editor of *The Tower* only brought me expenses—what was to come of it? Carefully and gently my mother spoke to me of the desirability of getting "something permanent."

Now, here is something which can only be understood if one supposes, like Schiller and various other personages of like mind—that there is a Providence, a carefully and lovingly guiding hand, a fatherly power, without whose will not even a sparrow falls to the ground. According to all the rules of human honesty, I ought to have given up the literary life which had led to so meagre a result—to turn round while there was still time, to break my poet's pen, burn my verses, abandon the useless and endless ponderings on philosophical-religious problems and at last become a decent human being, an average worker, a father of a family and a citizen like the other thousands.

I could not—I did not do this. "All good," I wrote in the diary, "is contained for me in the idea of *growth*. And this is the very idea that the others do not understand. It does not seem right to them that a man should labour only at his growth." Further on: "I feel so far away from everyone's plans with me, alone with my own soul."

It needed foolhardiness to go on with the life I had hitherto been living. Although by nature timid and anxious, I had this foolhardiness. I went my own ways, as if there could be no question of doing anything else, and as if I had the feeling that my life was to be devoted to a task which I alone could perform and which therefore had to be performed *in spite of* everything. I felt myself *called* and I obeyed—as the soldier obeys when his

emperor calls him from hearth and home. " My soul is like a lonely brook which softly murmurs and complains, and like the flight of birds at night, goes on its destined path to distant lands." I felt that my destiny—God's will with me, was now to be fulfilled, and I prayed, " Lord, guide me !"

The answer to my prayer, the realisation of my presentiment, came in a letter from Verkade. After my flight from Copenhagen he had stayed on as the guest of the Ballins. Through Mogens Ballin he had obtained an insight into the difficulties with which I was contending ; he had now conceived the plan of extricating me from them and helping me to obtain new impressions, new thoughts. A lottery of pictures, to which he, Ballin and other artist friends contributed, procured a sum of money, and in a letter dated April 26th he informed me of this and suggested a journey abroad—my first. As a preliminary goal for my journey he proposed the Benedictine monastery of Beuron in South Germany, to which he was going himself, and at which he asked me to meet him.

This letter did not produce any revival of my Catholic sympathies. Rather the opposite. The diary states, soon after this : " At five o'clock this afternoon I went to the Grass Eyots " (a large wood near Svendborg). " A strong feeling of pantheism took possession of me when I heard the fluty notes of the blackbird and looked out over the white carpet of anemones amongst the grey tree-trunks to the golden-green background of the shining, new, sunlit foliage in the depths of the wood. A wonderful, luminous, golden ground behind the grey columns. Higher up the silvery luminous air—and a glint of sun amongst the leaves.

" A mystic pantheism seized me, swelling and intoxicating. I perceived sickness and death to be necessary consequences of life—its rightful adjuncts. I shuddered at the thought of my own bodily dissolution, but furthest

away the sunlit infinity of life gleamed like a golden wall."

Now that the door leading out to the great world was being opened to me, now that the road to the south suddenly lay smooth before me, I recoiled. "Is it not only for my own personal pleasure that I am looking for travel, for freedom, for new visions? Do I not want to evade my duty? Now and then I am filled with dread, as if there were something unjustified in this undertaking—something that will revenge itself. But would not the opposite incur a greater revenge? Does man necessarily always bring a Nemesis upon himself, whatever he does? Is it impossible for us to fulfil the law? *Must* there be a tinge of wrong in all things?"

This feeling prepared the way for another, a definitely Christian one. The diary says: "I am beginning to understand what it means: *to be in need of grace*. For no one can by Nature live without sinning, no one has the power to imitate Christ. In all that we do we need to be forgiven, to be received in grace. But this requires that man should acknowledge his continual sinfulness. This is the first condition for obtaining grace from God, the reinstatement in grace enabling him to meet the stern demands of the moral world order and the laws of conscience, the raising to a higher plane, in which man receives power to do what is right."

With this dawning consciousness of sin there is a dawning hope of pardon, of new life. "I sit on a grassy slope in the woods. In front of me the bushes have newly come into leaf, their light coloured foliage sways gently in the wind. Humble-bees are droning, the soft wind is sighing, shadows of foliage flicker lightly, in delicate play, over the brown background. The thrush is singing—it is light and cool about me—ah, God! dared I but hope for reinstatement, for a second spring!"

This feeling of duality returned again and again. "A tormenting feeling of my own meanness and hideousness,

and a deep, ardent yearning for the great forces of life." In tune with this I read Axel Lundegard's novel, *Prometheus*, and quote from it: "It was depth and piety that were lacking in the feelings of modern human beings—aspiration, reverence, the ideal consecration. These forces had disappeared from existence, and therefore life had become the flat and earth-bound thing it was." I added: "What I need, and what all those need who have been ruined by the modern spirit, is to be *saved*. With how deep a remorse and grief do I not look from the picture of an ideal existence in Lundegard's book to myself and my life, my impotent soul, my early physical desecration—I am troubled at the thought that these prophets of liberty are still preaching their deadly gospels—and with how much trembling do I not hope for the possibility of a re-birth . . ."

In spite of all rapturous Nature worship, one thing is quite certain: that there is an "eternal order." Behind Pantheism is Theism—"the belief that the ideal in ourselves is the governing, guiding and sustaining power of the world—that *God* is the Almighty." "In Christianity alone is the individual of any account, and the aim of personality is set as high as possible—in the life in God. From a naturalistic point of view personality is swallowed up in a fulfilment of the typical functions, and its religious attitude becomes Orphic, Pantheistic—a surging away into the great whole, ἓν χαι Παν. Naturalism is therefore consistently amoral, and 'it is natural that Georg Brandes—in his letters of travel from Bad Elster—should laugh contemptuously at the Berlin philosopher Gizycki and his Tolstoian Christian Society for Ethical Culture.' Gizycki cannot laugh back, because autonomous morals lack all protection whatsoever against those who deny morals. As Höffding has admitted, they cannot deny that a consistent egoism is justified" (May 6th). J. P. Jacobsen was therefore wrong when he attacked the love of God as a hindrance to the love of one's neighbour.

"Only he who believes that the good is the almighty has the courage and the desire to do what is good." And it is better not to speak of the "yoke" of Christianity—that *yoke* is like the pressure of the atmosphere, man cannot live without it!

But this new approach to Christianity does not mean any drawing near to Rome. Instead of going to Mass I accompany my mother and sisters to the Methodist church of St. John and enjoy listening to the sermons. After reading the Gospel I read St. Paul and make the following comment, for instance, on the Epistle to the Romans, vi, 23: "The whole universe has arisen out of the defection of the will from God, i.e. the Fall. The philosophy of development does not explain why there is a restraining force at the base of life. Christianity explains it as a will that has turned away from God, the goal of which is emptiness."

Thus days and weeks pass—I read, think, make notes, ponder, write. Through the intervention of Mogens Ballin I received a commission for an essay on Danish literature for Jean Finot's Revue des Revues; Jan Verkade procured me admission to a Dutch periodical, for which I wrote, in German, an article on Joakim Skovgaard.

Meanwhile spring was advancing, Easter had faded into the past, the woods were green, Whitsuntide was drawing near. Tired of thinking and reading, believing and doubting, I resorted to the woods—the golden-gleaming woods of May, where the cuckoo was calling and the nightingale warbling—I wandered by grassy paths through copses of young beech-trees, on which the soft light-green leaves hung on long, fine stalks, long and fine like dainty woman's fingers. And came to rest in some place far away from all books, often at a country parsonage, under the big chestnut outside the house. There I would sit beside the old well and listen to the purling of the water into the large stone trough, hear the humming of the bees in the huge, blossoming dome of the

tree—it was like sitting at the bottom of a dark-green sea, with foaming white flowers high up overhead !—hearing the trills of the nightingale in the parsonage garden. There were apple-trees in blossom behind the garden hedge, white and pure, with arched branches against the mild, delicate blue of the evening sky.

About this time news arrived from Mogens Ballin that I could start in a fortnight. He was going south himself ; we could travel together. My wife and our son were to stay with my parents.

One morning after this letter had come I was sitting alone at the parsonage. I had gone into the garden, had walked carefully on the newly-raked paths between rows of narcissi. I was now sitting on a bench overlooking Svendborg Sound, under blossoming apple-trees ; a little further back stood the large chestnut, its perfume and the humming of the insects on its branches sweeping over me like waves. The sun was shining, and although it was as yet only nine o'clock it was very warm. The petals of the apple-blossoms were falling softly on the tall grass full of dandelions before me. A thrush was warbling, repeating its trills again and again at short intervals. Suddenly the nightingale perched in the apple-tree just over my head poured forth its strong, sweet notes.

Then my whole soul swelled up, as on that May morning ten years before —swelled with a better joy than then ! I knelt down in the warm grass in front of the seat, stretched out my arms to the sun and *gave thanks*. Gave thanks for the beauty, for the spring morning, the sun, for all the fatherly goodness which I felt around me, like the sunny air ; for the gentle hand by which I felt myself guided. And I prayed, " Lord, preserve my soul and let me live long upon the earth. Let me return home, sound and new, to redeem all wherein I have erred and begin a new life ! I am empty and poor —let me be filled with Thy world and Thy life, that my voice may grow strong and sweet like the nightingale's !"

# *IN THE CELL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE*

## "THOU PARADISE OF EXILES."

*Relinque omnia, et invenies Deum.*—THOMAS A KEMPIS. IMITATION OF CHRIST

### I

"AND so you are taking the road of the romantics," Georg Brandes said to me, when I called on him one day in May, 1894, before setting out on my journey. "What are you going to do in all those old mediæval towns?"

As a goal for my wanderings I had mentioned Nuremburg, Augsburg, Rothenburg ob der Tauber. I did not mention Italy, for my longings did not go so far. That to which I felt myself drawn, as in their day the Danish and Swedish romantics had been drawn, was the Germany in which I had been at home since my earliest youth, *das alte romantische land*, where Gretchen kneels in the Gothic cathedral and Faust and Mephisto lurk in the dim light of the lamp flickering before the picture of a saint. It was the Germany of the young Goethe I was longing for, the Germany of the romantics, Heine's Germany of the Harzreisen, Uhland's, Brentano's and Eichendorff's Germany, the Germany that built Strassburg Minster and sang out its heart's woe and its homesickness in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. *In einem tiefen Grunde*, I, too, wanted to hear the mill-wheel turning—"*hör' ich das Mühlrad gehen, ich weiss nicht, was ich will. Am liebsten möcht' ich sterben, dann wär's auf einmal still.*" In the summer night under the golden stars, I wanted to stand

lonely at the window of the inn and hear the distant horn of the mail coach and feel my heart burning in my bosom :

*Es schienen so golden die Sterne,*
*am Fenster ich einsam stand*
*und hörte aus weiter Ferne*
*ein Posthorn im stillen Land.*
*Das Herz mir im Leibe enthrannte,*
*da hab' ich mir heimlich gedacht :*
*Ach, wer da mitreisen könnte*
*in der prächtigen Sommernacht.*

Meanwhile, it was anything but the old, romantic country that greeted Mogens Ballin and myself, when, on the evening of May 29th, 1894, we sat in a cab and rolled through Berlin from the Stettinerbahnhof to the small hotel in Burgstrasse 11, the address of which had been given us by a friend. It was Copenhagen on a larger scale, but not more handsome. However, I found the modest, slightly old-fashioned hotel homely—and listened with admiration to Ballin speaking German. At the family table, where the habitual guests also sat, I ate my first German *abendbrot*, which was later to be followed by so many others. The host presided at the meal, with his wife and daughter at his side, and besides Ballin and myself there was only one other guest, an elderly German. I listened to the conversation, naïvely surprised to hear how well the Germans spoke German. Later, when we had separated for the night, while I was undressing, I heard Ballin saying his prayers in the next room. He carried a small standing crucifix with him on the journey. While he was unpacking I had remembered how I had seen him kneeling in St. Ansgar's church at Easter. It had seemed strange to me to see the lively, gay-spirited young man kneel down, become serious, look up at the altar and fold his hands. I remembered how he had looked then—his face would be wearing that expression

now. Involuntarily I approached the door, but turned back ashamed. I had just caught some Latin words: "*nunc et in hora mortis*"—"now and at the hour of death." He was only twenty-three and was already thinking of death! I remembered a day at the Independent Art Exhibition, we had seen together an elaborately decorated cradle by Harald Slott-Möller, bearing the inscription *Memento vivere*—the heathen protest against the Christian *Memento mori*. "Yes," Ballin had said, "but in order to live well one must think of death."

Next morning we went out into the sunshine of Berlin, where the linden trees stood arrayed in their Whitsuntide green, from the Schloss bridge up to the Pariserplatz and Brandenburger Thor. Ballin, who had been in the German capital before, did not care for the city. My own feeling about it was one of relief at finding a large, new world opening to me.

During the day we visited the museums. I saw now all that I had hitherto only read about or seen in reproductions in histories of art—pictures by Velasquez, Claude Lorrain, Watteau, Vermeer, Cuyp, Leonardo's Santa Lucia; Madonnas by Botticelli; saints by Duccio; reliefs by Mino da Fiesole.

In the evening we went to the Café Bauer, where we met a group of Danes of the Bohemian type of artist, accompanied by their ladies, all of them very noisy and talking witless improprieties. "That is what we have left," Ballin said to me, when we had returned to the hotel. "May neither of us ever go back to that Denmark!"

That night we talked about religion. I had taken with me, amongst other books, Martensen's little work about Master Eckhardt, and now read to Ballin some of the pages which had made an impression upon me. In one place the great German mystic speaks of conversion and its effect—"the moment which can restore to us all that we have lost and wasted in the world." I was sitting on the sofa, reading, Ballin standing in front of me behind

the table. At the words mentioned he interrupted me and said with great emotion: "*Benedicat te omnipotens Deus, Pater, et, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus*!"—Afterwards, when I was alone, I also prayed. My thoughts flew northwards, to the shattered home, to the wife and child I had left. "Ah, God," I prayed, "is it possible that all may yet be well?" I ask for no new happiness, but only that what is within my power to obtain may be mine, purely and wholly!"

It was my first plan, on leaving Berlin, to go to Weimar—a Goethe pilgrimage! "What do you want with that old heathen?" Ballin exclaimed. I postponed the visit, till twenty years after! In the afternoon, on the 1st of June, we left Berlin. My ticket was for Nuremburg, Ballin went to Munich in order to go by the quickest route to Assisi, where he had decided to spend the summer. Verkade was at Beuron with the Benedictines, there I was also expected.

Early next morning I parted from Ballin. We had again talked a great deal about the state of things in Denmark, about the attitude to life there and in other countries. "What we all need," Mogens had said, "is humility. We are all proud, evil, mean."

I have described that month of June in Germany in 1894 in the first part of *Le Livre de la Route*. When I wrote that book, however, I had already taken my stand on the side of one of the two powers, the contest of which for the possession of a soul the book describes. The description is therefore one-sided, emphasises too much the group of thoughts and feelings that led me to Rome, and throws only a half-light on the other group of ideas and moods—those that tried to keep me back in German Pantheism.

That summer month, sun-baked, rain-drenched, luxuriant and abundant in flowers, in Nuremburg and Rothenburg, in the valley of the Tauber and the Danube, in Bavaria, Franconia and Hohenzollern, by the yellow

Isar and the gleaming, luminously hazy Bodensee below Säntis and in the midst of Scheffel's romanticism, was, in reality, a time of severe temptation for the wayfarer of twenty-seven. At Rothenburg I drank the golden Tauber wine with young American painters; at Munich, in artists' taverns, I met Schlittgen, Otto Eckmann, Th. Th. Heine and Louis Korinth. It was not every night that I could make up my mind to going to bed at eight, pulling down the blinds and reading the works of mystics, while joyous laughter on a summer evening could be heard outside. I visited Verkade at the monastery in Beuron, but fled after only twenty-four hours of its cloistered peace and solitude. The gardens of Mainau and the singing of birds on a summer afternoon were a second Gurre to me, and one evening about midsummer, as I was standing in the meadows outside Sigmaringen, and saw that though the hour was late the sky was still white above the mountains in the north, I longed bitterly for home, for the white summer nights and my lawless youth. The enthralling power of German Pantheism grew stronger and stronger in my soul, the impulse to let myself glide on and sink into a delicious swoon, to yield up my will to the great will of Nature. The words of a converted German, "The power of the abyss has drawn him back to itself" might also have been applied to me.

When, like Joseph Görres and Clemens Brentano, I saved myself from the embraces of the Rhine daughters, from the Lorelei and the water pixies, and happily found my way out to the Latin daylight, it is wholly due to the compassionate help of a higher Power. A Power, which, in the midst of the darkness of sensual desires, suddenly made me seize the French *Manuel de Piété* which Verkade had given me at parting, and which bestowed comfort through the Davidic psalms, through the prayers and hymns of the office of Compline, through the invocations of the litany: "*a spiritu fornicationis, libera nos, Domine!* *Ut mentes nostras cœlestia desideria erigas, te*

*rogamus, audi nos* ! " " That thou wouldst deliver us from the spirit of fornication and lift up our souls to desire heavenly things, we beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord !" At such times, like rays of clear and radiant light, the truth shone into my soul. " In God alone is there light and joy for man. Outside God there is nought but void, misery and hideousness (even the purely physical. My face, as I saw it last night in a mirror, was like that of an animal)" (The diary, June 19th).

On Sunday, June 24th, I was in Lucerne, and in the evening the following incident occurred and was recorded in the diary : " I was walking along the banks of the river, my glance now fixed on some young girls in front of me, now on the clear, swifty-flowing river and the reflections of the towers in it. A storm was gathering over Pilatus. Then I passed a church in which evening service was going on ; I went in and saw Christ on the altar and the candles before Him, and heard a priest in the distance saying the words, " *Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.*" I folded my hands and bowed down, I made the sign of the Cross and felt a trembling happiness. As I went out I blessed myself with the holy water, and as the cold water touched my forehead I felt how small I was and how pitiable were all my pleasure-loving thoughts."

On that evening in Lucerne I did not know that it happened to be the feast of St. John, and even if I had known, it would hardly have occurred to me that he was the saint whose name is associated in the minds of average Danes with the midsummer bonfires on St. John's Eve. Would I have remembered that it was he who in the Gospel is called the Baptist, of whom the Master said that among the children of men there was none greater than he ? That it was to him that the word of the Lord came in the desert, the call and the command to prepare the way and make straight the paths ? That it was he who said to the people : " I am a voice crying in the wilderness," and to the learned and the philosophers :

"I am he who is *not*" (not He who *is*, that is, Jehovah)? That it was he to whom the Church applies the words of the prophet: "The Lord called me from my mother's womb, he thought of my name before I was born. He has made my mouth like a piercing sword, He has sheltered me under the shadow of His hand. He has laid me aside like an arrow that He has chosen and kept me hidden in His quiver" (*Isaiah*, ch. 49)?

In the early days in Svendborg it had amused the boys at school to give me the nickname of "the Baptist" (and my mother's name—like the Baptist's,—was Elisabeth!) That, however, may be disregarded. But on that evening in Lucerne, the evening of St. John's day, the great saint whose name had been given me in baptism asserted his rights and stretched out his hand over me. On that evening my fate was sealed—in spite of all unworthiness, in spite of all weakness, I was to be like him, a voice crying in the wilderness, and one who was to prepare the way of the Highest—"*Vox clamantis in deserto; Parate vias Domini*!"

## II

"Your room, including a breakfast of coffee and rolls, will cost you one franc twenty-five centimes per day; and for two good and ample meals, including wine, you will pay three francs fifty."

This information about the cost of living on the coast of the Mediterranean was sent to me by Sophus Claussen, who was staying at Rapallo. Living was cheap in those days, and I had to be economical. The sum which had been placed at my disposal did not exceed one thousand kroner, and a portion of this I had left behind for my wife and child. When, therefore, in *Le Livre de la Route*, I say about my other, scarcely better self, Signor Giovanni, that "he had sought luxurious living wherever he went," and that "he had wasted much goods," it means that he

lived on about five or six francs a day. When one is a newly converted Catholic and wants to say unpleasant things to oneself in a spirit of penitence one calls such living "luxurious."

It was on June 25th that I came through the big hole in St. Gothard into the Italian summer. My first arrival in Italy—now twenty-two years ago! The first of seven arrivals, until Italy finally became my second country, and arriving in it was like coming home—*thou paradise of exiles, Italy*!

There was a stop at Luino, and a friendly railway employee took me to a church a little way outside the town to see Luini's frescoes. It was in the middle of the day, and under a burning sun I strode for the first time along a dusty Italian road: for the first time I trod the deep, soft and shining white Italian dust. "*O polvere mia carissima*, oh, dear Italian dust, I know there are those who do not love thee, do not understand thee, do not value thee! *Sorella mia polvere*, my Sister Dust, thou wert my first Italian friend—thou gavest me welcome at the very border and didst spread thy deep, soft carpet for my feet; thou hast faithfully gone with me ever since in all my wanderings, wherever I have gone. On the plains thou hast sent up whirling columns like a pillar of cloud to warn me of the coming storm, of the devastating, hammering cloudburst, full of thunder and voices. In the heat of the burning sun thou hast refreshed me with thy faint perfume, which is like the dry taste of biscuits, and after the heavy rain thy crude fragrance has risen like the smell from the lime-pit when it is slaked. Thou hast laid paths white as marble from Pisa out to *il Gombo* and up towards Carrara; thou hast spread rosy paths between the Appennines of Umbria to Nocera and to Gualdo. And thou, Sister Dust, didst help Giotto to paint; thou didst attend him like a good handmaid; thou didst bring him red dust and green dust, blue dust, purple dust, ochre dust, *terra umbra* and *terra di Siena*!

In thy bosom, Sister Dust, I will one day lie down to rest in the God's acre of Assisi with a view over the valley of the Tescio, which is stern and bare and terrible like the valley of Jehosaphat! In thy embrace, Sister Dust, will I rest—Sister Dust, from whom I am come, to whom I shall return, from whose arms I shall again arise—Sister Dust, dearest little sister—*Sorella Polvere mia carissima*!"

The next day at noon I arrived in Genoa. "A walk through the streets in delightfully warm weather. Steep, narrow lanes with steps, and linen hanging to dry from house to house, washing-places, open shops with piles of fruit, street-sellers crying their wares, young women with black veils on their heads—everything seems to me so infinitely new and yet so well-known and familiar. I feel more at ease than I ever did in Germany. I walk quite slowly in the shadow of the houses and look at people. Alas, that I should have spent so much time north of the Alps!"

At the station I met Sophus Claussen, who greeted me with a cheery: "How are you, compatriot?" We went to Rapallo together by the wonderful Riviera railway, which is an unbroken chain of black tunnels and blue outlooks.

For a time I now stayed at Rapallo with Sophus Claussen; I do not know why, and do not know to this day. It was as though in that year, which was to be a decisive one for me, I had no will, no plan; I did not act, I was led. Those who do not believe in Providence, still less in Saint John the Baptist, will say that I am superstitious, and they may do so if they like, but I have the idea that He who knows the hearts and the wills, and who in His great game of chess with His black adversary required the humble pawn, J.J.—that He employed a holy ruse in taking advantage of my innate love of contradiction, to get me more on to *His* side. At Beuron, amongst the Benedictines and in talks with the devout Verkade, I had felt like a Pantheist. After my flight from the monas-

tery I wrote, sitting at the table in the inn at Hausen with the wine in front of me: "A quiet, quiet valley between green, sunny hills. No sound, only now and then quiet, distant voices and the closing of a door upstairs. Scent of hay and of all the flowers in the meadows. A busy insect life everywhere, humming and flittering. A naturalistic mood comes over me, a spirit of Goethe, who said: 'Nature, Nature, thou ever exalted woman!'"

When the bells rang in the valley of the Danube and at Mühlberg near Sigmaringen I had felt like a heathen, a child of nature, and I prayed to a Pantheistic God for "courage to live like the creeping things—like the grass that grows and puts on verdure." And one evening in Augsburg, in warm darkness and the scent of linden trees, I formulated this naturalism of mine as the true "Augsburg Confession."

But here in Rapallo I found in Sophus Claussen a naturalist who went far beyond me, if not in theory, then in practice. While I had been living in Denmark, editing *The Tower* and suffering want in various ways, he had been spending his father's money in acquiring many experiences in Paris and Italy. He had been a disciple of Verlaine in living like a Bohemian, but had not followed him in his conversion. In Paris he had dedicated a sonnet to me, ending with these lines:

> Demand no other sign of the meeting with art in these days, almost empty of souls, than the past, from which we are bleeding to death.

In order not to bleed to death from a real heart's wound, he now hardened himself and decided that life existed for the purpose of being consumed. "The highest," he asserted, "is to go beyond the laws of life." These were his parting words to the J. P. Jacobsen of our youth and his slogan: "to allow life to mould itself on its own laws." "I do not believe in laws, not even those of life," said Claussen. A decadent mystic, he con-

fessed his faith in " the sanctity of corruption," in " the beauty of pestilence," and raged against Paul Bourget, whose *Sensations d'Italie* were lying on his table, and whom he declared " already to have gone to the dogs." Claussen was a very decided, quite consistent immoralist and enemy of everything other than this life, and I could not follow him. Hence there was a continual war of words between us, sometimes waged at the dinner-table in the summer-house, from the vine-branched roof of which lizards and " walking-sticks " fell into our *pasta sciutta ;* sometimes during evening strolls along the seashore or among the mountains, when the fireflies were swarming under the olive trees—*le chiare belle*, as they are called at the Riviera, the clear and beautiful. We were both young, also hot-tempered—once it happened that we threw the door-key (which we shared) at each other's heads, or, more solemnly, declared ourselves mutual " enemies." One evening in my anger I even moved to another hotel, and to my dismay discovered next morning that it was the most expensive one in Rapallo ; fortunately Claussen was good-natured, and helped me to leave again without too great expense. After these disputes I usually took refuge in the church of Rapallo. It was in the vilest taste ; it was in the baroque style. The pillars in it were covered with some kind of red stuff with a gold border, and five cut-glass chandeliers hung in front of the altar. But it was always open. I could not find out when a service was held in it, although its bells were nearly always ringing with a clear and festive sound, " as if they were hammering in golden nails," Claussen said. People sat patiently inside and waited, fanning themselves, jingling their rosaries, putting candles before the altars or praying. I found a bench in a dark corner, and one day I took courage and knelt down like the others. At first it made my knees ache, but I soon grew used to the position and liked it. In this way I spent many an hour while Claussen was having his

afternoon nap, glad to be in the cool church open to the sunny market-place, praying without words, but now and then with the feeling of a great happiness, a sort of tremulous peace.

I did not know then—or if I did, I had forgotten it again, that ten years earlier, in the winter of 1882-83, in this same little Rapallo, Friedrich Nietzsche had written the first part of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. But it was here, face to face with one whose ideal was the superman, that I felt it was impossible to turn back to the world of thought of the great Ghibelline.

Claussen and I did not always quarrel ; on many a day we surrendered ourselves peaceably to the joys of the Mediterranean or climbed the mountains about the town together. Through rocky ravines, along the banks of brooks, by terrace gardens, the paths led up to the chestnut woods. There we would sit down and rest on a grassy mound or on a fern-covered stone wall, our feet placed on the trunk of a large fig-tree growing out of a cleft in the wall beneath us. The cicada sang about us in the noon-day stillness, like priests of Isis shaking their *sistra*. Lizards slip by along the wall, stop, peep at us with heads raised, their sides heaving, then disappear suddenly and vertically down the wall. Through a peep between the trees can be seen the silvery grey domes of the olive groves, the black spires of the cypresses ; below, pink and white Rapallo lies near the blue sea like a happy dream ; and to listen to the bells pealing festively and unceasingly down there is like the feeling of an angel —a blissful instant, free from all desire, never to end. . .

## III

I had left Sophus Claussen and Rapallo, I was alone in Lucca. Why Lucca ? I had no particular reason whatever for going to Lucca ; still less had I any for staying there.

Mogens Ballin, who was now in Assisi, and whose advice I had asked by letter, had advised me not to go to Florence, as it would be far too hot there in July, and he thought Pistoja would be better, cooler. On the way thither I came to Lucca.

Again—as I think in my superstition—the supreme direction of existence had had its wise and beneficent intentions with this visit. Lucca is a town not particularly associated with art, all its " sights " can be seen in half a day : the Romanesque cathedral, the Romanesque church of San Michele, the church of San Frediano, the small Pinakothek. If I made a longer stay there it was in order to be alone, to think things over, to pray.

After the disturbing time with Claussen solitude was soothing. " I am sitting on a rampart at Lucca, in half-withered grass, under the shadow of the tall dark-green trees. In front of me is what used to be the city moat, now grass-grown, green and sunny ; further away are the suburbs of Lucca, with their greyish-white façades and dull red roofs, and their avenues of plane trees with gleaming white trunks. Behind them the mountains rise, at first clothed in the green of gardens and woods, then steeper, sharper, reddish where there is stone, violet in the sunny haze, furthest away there are white grooves—stone quarries ? or snow ? Small round, reddish clouds hang motionless in the hazy air above the mountains, like fish in the water. The cicada are singing in the tall trees in the groves behind me, a cool breeze stirs in the shade and I feel infinitely at ease—as in days very long ago " (Diary, July 6th).

From the Lucca rampart I passed on to the Lucca churches. " In San Romano a beautiful marble Madonna, a praying half-size figure, surrounded by angels' heads, above obe door ; and inside the church on the chancel arch a painting on a golden ground—a Madonna showing the Child Jesus beneath her outspread cloak to two kneeling kings. How mean and insipid is all that Catholic

finery, with its ' Sacred Hearts ' and its paper flowers ! In the Duomo. The dark *Tempietto* with the mediævally powerful *Volto Santo*—a wooden cross, on which the Saviour is painted by a believing and unpractised hand " (July 7th).

But I went to the churches less and less in order to see, more and more in order to pray. I had found a small church where some white monks sang vespers and compline every evening between six and seven ; thither I generally resorted ; there I knelt on the hard stone floor ; there the Gregorian chant moved me to tears. When I went home it was the hour of the evening walk in Lucca. The square at San Michele and the large tree-shaded Piazza Napoleone were filled with young Italian girls dressed in white. Now and then their black eyes rested on my foreign-looking figure, and for a moment I grew hot at the thought of my woman-hunting fellow-countrymen's stories of their Italian adventures. But soon after I was in the Albergo della Campana, in my large room, which with its brick floor and its whitewashed walls looked like a monastic cell ; soon I was lying behind closed shutters in my cool bed, reading Thomas à Kempis by the light of a candle.

" The divine book," I had called it, and next to the Holy Scriptures it is perhaps that which has helped most souls back from the world and home to God. Its teaching is so simple, and experience confirms it all through. Or was it not written about me and for me, when Thomas let the soul say to God, " I am Thy most poor servant, and a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express.

" Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, I have nothing, and can do nothing.

" Thou alone art good, just and holy ; Thou canst do all things ; Thou givest all things, Thou fillest all things ; leaving only the sinner empty.

" Remember Thy tender mercies, and fill my heart

with Thy grace, Thou who wilt not that Thy works should be void.

" How can I support myself in this wretched life unless Thy mercy and grace strengthen me ?

" Turn not Thy face from me, delay not Thy visitation (of my soul) !" (Bk. III, ch. 3, vv. 6, 7).

Thus did Thomas let the sinner speak to God—and exactly thus had I prayed on that same evening in the church while the monks were singing. More than ever had I felt infinitely wretched and sinful, and like the publican I had sighed from afar : " Lord, what is my life to become, what future shall I have, how can my sin be blotted out ?" My glance went back over the years, over the whole of my life. I saw my wife, my little son far away, and again I prayed : " Lord, give me strength to confess ; help me to become humble and sincere ; guide my life, hold up my hands, strengthen my body and my soul ! For I am nothing, Lord ; help me, hear me, grant me Thy faith and Thy grace !"

Thus had I prayed, and therefore did I assent again and again as I read on to God's answer to the sinner :

" Think on thy sin with great displeasure and sorrow ; of a truth thou art a sinner, subject to and entangled with many passions. Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing."

And further : " Let nothing appear great, nothing valuable or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing praiseworthy or desirable but that which is eternal . . . Let thy own exceeding great vileness ever displease thee."

For me, as for the monk in the monastery of Agneteberg, the colloquy ended with these words from the sinner's lips and from his heart : " Lord, Thou showest me to myself, what I am, what I have been, and what I am to come to ; for I am nothing, and I knew it not. My sins bear a true testimony and I cannot contradict it."

But when the sinner is silent it is God's time to speak.

My son, saith the Lord, I must be thy chief and last end, if thou desirest to be truly happy. By this intention shall thy affections be purified, which too often are irregularly bent upon thyself and things created. Principally, therefore, refer all things to me, for it is I that have given thee all. Wait a little while, my soul; wait for the divine promise, and thou wilt have abundance of all good things.

And so I read, and thought, and read again. And one warm July night, when I could not sleep because of a restless couple in the next room, I wrote in my diary with a pencil, by the feeble light of the candle, these lines, in which I formulated a Catholic fundamental doctrine in order to make it clear to myself:

"The Mass(at which I had been present in Beuron under the guidance of Verkade)—Mass means man's sacrifice to God. Christ's sacrifice is the sacrifice of humanity to God, in obedience unto the death on the Cross. Christ was the perfect man, and in faith in Him as the perfect one we try to share in His sacrifice; in communion with Him we obtain reconciliation to God. The sacrifice of the Mass is the soul and body of the Church—which is offered to Jesus. But in this way they become a part of the mystical Body of Jesus (Transubstantiation). Amen, Lord, I thank Thee."

## IV

After Lucca I went to Pistoja, where I stayed nearly a month. I made an arrangement with a landlady in the Via del Arancio, by which I was to pay five lire fifty centesimi per day for a room, light, boot-cleaning, morning coffee and two meals including wine. Here I heard for the first time the Tuscan *h* instead of *c*—"*Ma e una hamera bellissima*," a landlady said to me at the house where I looked for a room.

And this one *was* a *camera bellissima.* In my book, *Roman Mosaics*, I wrote a page about it which I will quote here; it is to be found in the chapter entitled "Italian Rooms":

"Ah, these beautiful, plain Italian rooms, of which I have in the course of years seen a great number. I remember, for instance, my room at Pistoja, in the Orange Street, behind the beautiful church of black and white striped marble, called San Giovanni Evengelista Fuora civitas.

"I stayed at Pistoja during the height of a very hot summer. I had come from the Mediterranean, from Genoa and the small seaside resort of Rapallo on the Italian Riviera. In that little summer village, after days and nights of strife in words and wrestling in spirit, I had said good-bye to a friend with whom I had wrestled as with a part of myself, and whom I had left behind as a past that was over. Now I was quite alone, far away from my wife and child, far from kindred and friends, far from my own country—alone in that sun-baked Pistoja, the houses and roads of which blazed all day long in the sun, so that one's eyes smarted and ached. Even in the morning when I opened my shutters the warm sunshine poured into my room, making me move my table into the coolest corner, where I sat with my writing materials and books. The room was whitewashed like a convent cell; the floor was of red brick; the furniture consisted of a bed, two tables, a chest of drawers and four chairs with green rush seats. Above the door, which was set deep in the thick wall and had no other fastening than an old-fashioned iron latch, I had written the motto which was to rule my life in this room: "*Ora et labora*"—"Pray and work!" Hour after hour I sat there in that room in the Via del Arancio. I heard the women in the adjoining houses throwing water out of the window, more or less dirty water, that slapped against the pavement of the deep, narrow street. I wrote and I read, the day passed, the air

began to grow cooler, and people talked with each other from one flat roof to the other or from window to window. Then I would take my hat and go to the Piazza Cino, where the largest café in Pistoja is to be found, and also the post office, and after fetching my letters I would sit down to read them under the awning while I drank an acid *gazzosa* . . ."

About this time I made the acquaintance of a young and congenial representative of modern Italy—Gino Riccomanni, an advocate, and editor of the local Liberal paper, *Il Popolo Pistojese*. The young Italian was interested in meeting someone from Scandinavia, and we went on some walking tours together in the Pistojese Apennines, and once or twice we went to the theatre, where we saw Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Under the influence of letters from Mogens Ballin I began to be interested in Francis of Assisi, and my newly-acquired Pistojese friend was kind enough to buy and present me with a copy of Guasti's Italian translation of Chavin de Malan's book on the saint. It soon became clear to Signor Riccomanni, however, that I had not only Franciscan but Catholic sympathies, and one day when we were visiting a church together and I signed myself with holy water at the entrance, as I had acquired the habit of doing since that evening in Lucerne, he abruptly bade me good-bye and gave up my society altogether.

Again I was thrown back upon myself, and was quite absorbed in reading, thinking, praying, and in arranging theological standpoints. I went often to the evening service in the church of the Madonna dell' Umilità, which, by the way, was a commonplace, round, baroque church, but in which there were devotions every evening and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Here I became acquainted with the litany of Loretto, grew to like it and began to repeat its invocations, especially these : " Queen of Angels, Queen of Martyrs, Queen of Confessors, Queen of Virgins, Queen of All Saints." Under the date

of July 25th the diary notes in Italian: "*Prima preghiera alla Madonna, con sentimento profondo.*" Another church which I often visited, mostly during the quiet hours of the afternoon, was that of San Bartolommeo in Pantano; there, as far as I was able, I implored God to show mercy to me by letting me see the truth clearly and not allowing me to go astray in my search. It was there that one day I suddenly felt the awful majesty of God, and that it was almost presumption to draw near to Him in prayer.

At Rapallo I had already begun a correspondence with Verkade. The Dutch painter was tending more and more in the direction of the religious life. I wrote to him from Pistoja to obtain enlightenment on Catholic life and doctrine. He wrote long, detailed and explanatory letters to me (unfortunately I no longer have them) and sent me a French translation of the New Testament, as well as a small Catholic catechism, also in French.

The matters of doubt which I placed before the future Benedictine were those generally urged by Protestants. I was scandalised at indulgences (everywhere on church doors and beside altars I saw the ominous inscription: "*Indulgenzia plenaria*")—at the use of Latin in the service—at the Inquisition, the Crusades and a great deal more. "How," says the diary, "can Saint James be pleased with a lottery, horse racing and fireworks?" (That being the way in which his feast is celebrated in Pistoja, of which he is the patron saint.) "And how can he, that man of peace, have helped the Spaniards in the extermination of the Saracens?" (I was thinking of the Spanish battle-cry, in which Sant' Iago is invoked.) The prayer in the litany: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thou wilt humble the enemies of Thy holy Church!" also brought my Protestantism to simmering point. "This is a downright heathen prayer," I wrote; "it is praying *against* one's enemies." Of course, I had the inevitable experience of all travellers coming from Scandinavia, of entering a church and seeing women kneel here and there,

and rattle off prayers, while they look about them in every direction, and a conceited looking acolyte genuflects carelessly to the altar and swings the censer with a superior air, while ogling a girl who is probably his sweetheart. Yet I was less pharisaical than a good many others, for immediately after this scandalised effusion I wrote in the diary, "But, man, have you never rattled off prayers yourself, never been inattentive? Practise that perfection yourself which you demand from others!"

Thank God, I did not remain stuck in the mire of feeling scandalised, but I had a narrow escape. On later occasions I have again and again been on the brink of the abyss of feeling scandalised, which I consider one of the greatest dangers I have encountered in my life. The taking of scandal, with its big brother, false indignation, and its handsome sister, spurious "just anger" (in German, "*heiliger Lutherzorn*") is one of the most delicate soul-traps set by the hoary liar for souls that are not quite truthful. The bait he uses consists of the fat pork of fine words and the sweet cheese of self-complacence. And only those escape who take for their guide the words of the Apostle; "Be not liars against the truth" (Epistle of St. James, iii, 14).

I was in so far truthful that after the sweetness of the first moments I thought better of it and saw that what I wanted when I felt scandalised was not *the truth leading to redemption*, but *an excuse for freedom*. Honestly, and with the means at my disposal, the Bible, catechism, à Kempis, Tauler and Suso (the last-named bought in Munich and brought with me thence), I continued my attempts to to build a bridge to the truth which I felt must be like a rock.

The diary says: "The Father works from without, in Providence; the Holy Spirit from within—in conscience and inspiration, to lead a man to Christ, to the imitation of the Son, who is redemption. By faith in Him we become partakers of His perfect obedience, His sinlessness,

His holiness. In this way He is the sacrifice that delivers us from sin" (July 13).

" After an absence of two days at church again. Felt during prayer the harm it has done me, and how I had drifted away. Mother is right when she says in a letter : ' As soon as we do not speak to God any longer, *someone else* speaks to us.' But also when she writes, ' God does not let go the hand that has once been put into His.'

" Christ is the life in God, in Being, not in appearances; that is to say, He is happiness. He is man adjusted to God, that is, to the Essence of the world, not to its appearance. When I am not in Him, I am in appearance, in void, in unhappiness.

" But no one attains to the Father except through the Son, and no one to the Son except by the Holy Spirit. The soul seeking for God receives, first the Spirit of God, then the Son, finally the Father.

" All this comes to pass in the world of the soul, in the world which really is—as opposed to the fallen world of appearances apprehended by our senses, the reality of which alone rests on the interior, other-worldly existence —in the eternal Essence, dimly perceived through the recognition by Science of law ; dreamed of in the beauty created by Art, but in which we only *live* through Jesus Christ.

" I thank Thee, Lord, everlasting God, the only one in the world, that Thou hast fulfilled my prayer ; Thou hast so amply and abundantly made me understand that which is needful for me to know about the world and life.

" The turning away from the world, sorrow over one's life hitherto, is the first *approach to the Being of God*, the first unconscious prayer, which opens the first way for the Holy Spirit to our hearts.

" I thank Thee, O God, again and again, that of a sudden Thou hast made me see all things so clearly.

" The world darkens the soul and leads it to perdition. God gives everlasting life.

" Lord, I know that it is so " (July 14).

Later, same evening : 11.30 p.m. After reading Tauler. " How is God at the same time the creator of the world and the opposite of the world ?

" In this way : God is the Lord of Being, therefore the creator and ruler of all essential things, good in themselves. The devil is the denier of Being, he is the lord of *appearances* and is therefore powerless to create any contentment, but can only lead to conflict with Being. Renunciation of the world, of self, means renunciation of that which appears to be—but which *is* not—by force of that illusion to which man became subject by the Fall."

More and more did I strive, in my claustral solitude, to penetrate to the fundamental doctrine of Christianity : redemption through Christ.

" As in a good drama the way is prepared for the chief person by persons resembling him (Don Carlos of Posa), so God did not send forth His Word in its full splendour until He had revealed it in several other ways. First, the whole world is a revelation of the Word, over which hovers the Spirit of God. Next, Moses, David, the prophets and wise men are revealers of the Word, the Spirit of God resting upon them. Finally, Jesus Christ is the full revelation of the Word, and over Him, too, hovers the Holy Spirit. After Him the Word is revealed in all those who, guided by the Father, find their way to Christ, and to whom He sends the Holy Spirit. They are united with Him and the Spirit, and thereby united with the Father. They have found their way to the soul of Being, which is the Word, the Spirit and the Father, the triune God, and to union with Him, which is everlasting life " (July 17, at night, after reading Thomas à Kempis).

" How did Christ perform His work of redemption ?"

" Fasting is in itself a sacrifice. Every turning away

from the world of appearances is a sacrifice to Being—Christ's *complete* turning away from the world of appearances, His *complete* life in *Being*, was a whole sacrifice (*holocaustum*)."

In this way the mornings and evenings passed, and the days and nights. They were beginning to notice me in the churches of Pistoja, the old women begged soldi of me, my trousers grew worn at the knees—I acquired those famous Catholic kneeling-knees, owing to which a devout Catholic can never be quite well-dressed, with that perpendicular, unbroken trouser-line, which is the pride and outward sign of a modern man's good breeding. We have to put up with this, as with so many other inferiorities!

It was not always easy, however, for the neophyte from the North to feel his inferiority. On going to the café, it was trying to find that the erstwhile friend, Riccomanni, turned his back on one, to laugh and talk with other intelligent young Pistojese, professors at the college, and other gifted representatives of young Italy. The conversational tone at Signor Riccomanni's marble-topped table was not in the least Bohemian in the Scandinavian sense of the word; with Italian frugality they were content with a small cup of coffee at three soldi, and without any liqueurs at all. But there were discussions, the talk was loud and eager, and accompanied by many gestures and many a "*Ma chè*"—while I had no one to talk to but the waiters, and no kindred spirits but the old women in the churches! It was to take me twenty years to find my seat at the marble-topped café table of young Italy and talk about Mazzini, Carducci, d'Annunzio, Pascoli and Papini. And it was well that it was so, but in 1894 the loneliness was often a heavy burden. My life was a life in the past of Italy, not in its present—a life in the incense-filled shadows of the church, not in the sunshine of the day outside. One day in July I wrote these lines in the diary:

" 9 p.m. A great weariness of dogma has come over me. . . I was interrupted here, wrote it at the café. It is midnight now. I have tried to save myself as a Christian (' I judged not myself to know anything among you but Christ and Him crucified '),[1] as a mystic generally, as a Theist merely. But all in vain, my soul is sick. It is a beautiful evening, dark and quiet. I walked past the church, went out to the avenue outside the city gate and sat down on the parapet of the wall ; sat there looking across the green gardens towards the towers of Pistoja. I was reminded of the music of the other night—the violins, the voices, the song—*ride*, *pagliaccio*, *sul tuo amor infranto—ride*, *pagliaccio*, *sul tuo infranto amor* ! All the deep, human anguish, breaking out in sobs in these notes, these words—and set up against them asceticism in all its one-sided insufficiency !

" A long while I sat out there on the wall, my legs dangling. A belated firefly was flitting about in the vineyards lower down, a *chiara bella*—and I thought of Rapallo, of Sophus Claussen, of Stuckenberg and of Svendborg, of all my past, all my youth, which is gone and will never come back.

" It grew late, the moon rose, but I could not make up my mind to go home. In the silence and moonlight I walked about in the town. Almost all the streets were empty ; only in the square in front of the Ospedale del Ceppo a couple of girls came up and accosted me ; they were stout but pretty ; one recommended the other, and they were not angry when I declined their offer.

" Then I went home, opened the door with my big key and stood a long while at the window on the stairs, looking at the old convent garden behind the house. It was perfectly still ; the moon shone on the white arcades in the monks' cloister, and above the roofs stood Arcturus, the star of my childhood.

" I went up to my room, did not light the candle, but

[1] I Corinth. ii, 2.

went to the window. Above the moonlit roofs were the stars, and in my heart a deep longing burned for love, I felt stirred by life, felt its mystery and was full of longing —of longing for the unattainable.

" But where, O God, is the passion of love to be found in thy kingdom, in the Gospel ? I think of all the feelings that love bestows upon man—faithfulness, security, happiness—of all the moods born of the passion of love, of all the good that this great rebel against the law has worked and is able to work. All my northern heart swells and is deeply moved ; my first youth surges up again in my soul, and immortal words rise to my lips, the rebel hymn of the heart :

> ' Ah, thou full moonlight,
> here for the last time thou didst shine upon me
> whom ofttimes at midnight thou didst find
> poring over my folios.
> Above books and papers I beheld thee
> yonder in the skies.
> Could I but freely o'er the mountains roam
> in caves where spirits keep their watch,
> dream in the meadows in the mist of elves,
> wash myself clean in thy dew
> free from thinking, free from pain.' "

Once more it was Germany, it was romanticism that sang in the moonlight to draw me back to her soft arms. Once more I was bidden to the great Pantheistic supper, and beneath the stars in the stillness of the night I softly said the verses in which Faust divorces himself from his human dignity and has only one desire : to faint away on the great bosom—(' *von allem Wissensqualm entladen in deinem Thau gesund mich baden . . .*')

" Then " (says the diary) " this happened : God sent his angel. He would not have me in the dew of night and in the moon-mist. He took me by the hand and led me past all outward forms into the innermost core of His

redemption. I did as Faust did—I opened the New Testament, in which 'revelation burns most clearly and most worthily.' I lit a candle and read—first the Gospel according to St. John, then the Acts of the Apostles. And I found therein three sayings which enlightened me about everything.

"First, these words of Mary Magdalene to the Risen One, when she calls Him *Rabboni* (that is, Master). I burst into tears at them, as she must have done.

"Then these words of the Ethiopian steward to Philip: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'

"Finally these words of Peter (Acts xv, 11); 'By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we believe to be saved.' Then in deepest simplicity I saw that faith in Jesus as the Son of God obtains for us the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to eternal life. Amen."

## V

An important step had been taken; I had only to continue along the road upon which I had entered. I, the old worshipper of moonlight, the gourmand of moods, had made my choice. It was my will no longer to be a subject of Pan. I was still a dweller in Northern Elfland, but I wished to be naturalised in the land of the Latins.

Already I began to feel the sense of well-being given by an ordered mode of life. At Beuron I had for the first time seen a monastic regulation of the day—the "time-table" by which the monks school themselves. I, too, began to live by rule. A certain part of the day was devoted to duties (a translation of Edgar Allan Poe which a firm of Danish publishers had commissioned me to write, and which I completed on my travels). The rest of the time was occupied in going to church—I heard Mass nearly every day and as a rule visited the church in the morning and evening—and in continuing my theological reading and thinking.

The diary contains a series of proofs of this. On July 16th, for instance: "But as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God" (St. John, i, 12). In my religious efforts hitherto I have been very external, and only faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God has helped me to obtain the grace of God, by which I have been led to this day, through humbling myself before that which is holy and in fighting against the flesh to knowledge of the truth, which is "justification by faith."

"Jesus suffered the punishment we have all deserved for our sins, that is, a painful death. He who was without sin and whose life was obedient to the law of God suffered this for us. By faith in Him we are partakers of His death, which was a sacrifice, and thus we are justified by grace."

"In the Epistle to the Romans I read these words: 'If thou believest that Jesus is the Son of God, thou shalt live.' '. . . the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance' (ii, 4); by His *life* Jesus earned the grace of God and could therefore by His *death* blot out the sins of all mankind (v, 15); by the death of Christ those who believe in Him have died from sin, and this is the power of faith unto justification (vii, 4)."

"Hitherto I had tried, in my religious efforts, to approach *God Himself*. But Jesus is the Way to God, and there is no other. Hence there is for me something wanting in religion, a continual feeling of *being outside*. Until the Spirit of God, proceeding from the Son, at last permits me to see the great, simple truth and reveals to me the secret of redemption, the simple-minded confession of faith of the Ethiopian steward: 'I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.' In this faith are found justification and grace. Lord, my God, I thank thee with all my heart."

"Hitherto I have only *sought* after God (and He has guided my seeking). Now I know that I have found Him

in faith in the grace of Jesus Christ and justification by the power of the Cross. There is no other way to God than this, and I beseech Thee, Lord, to keep me on this path. Amen."

"The whole of Christianity is contained in the faith in the power of the Cross. Everything else that has hitherto taken up my thoughts is external—matter for thought—theory and theology —not teaching about redemption, not the one thing needful.

"Christ said to Saint Paul (Acts xxvi, v. 18): that (men) 'must be converted from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a lot among the saints by the faith that is in me.' Here again is the whole of the gospel.

"All my coldness, my clinging to vain things, my selfishness and all the emptiness which flows from it—all the nothingness that has hitherto reigned in my soul—because in Jesus Christ alone is it possible for man to live. In one sentence: In Jesus Christ alone is man wholly man, for in Jesus Christ alone is he in communion with God, that is, with life."

All this was written down, now in ink, in my room, now in pencil during walks or in church, in my pocket diary, in a single day. I have set forth the whole of it, not because the thoughts uttered here are new (far from it!), but in order to prove that when I approached Christianity at that time and became a Christian it was not a matter of emotional moods and not a matter of intoxication under narcotics—it was not for the sake of incense and Gregorian chants—but it was (and woe to me had it been otherwise!) a matter which had been thoroughly thought out, and it was the result of serious, honest thinking—naïve, if you like.

Once set going, the engine of thought did not stop until I had reached the logical goal of all Christian thinking, the keystone of dogma, the head corner stone of revelation, which the heretical builders, wise in their own

conceit, think they can reject (but it falls upon them and crushes them!) the Stone, the Rock, Cephas, Peter—*Rome*.

"A mystic Christianity, without history or dogma, would suit me," says the record in the diary of July 18th. A mystic-moral Christianity—as in Thomas à Kempis and as in our own time in Tolstoi. This I thought to-night, and went outside the town as was my habit. The cicada were singing in the trees in the avenue, the Angelus bells were ringing; I had prayed badly in church.

"Then this thought occurred to me (and whence did it come, who knows?)—this thought came: "Not the Scriptures, not the Bible, but communion with Christ is salvation. And what is communion with Christ but the *Church?* Surrender yourself to the Church; that is, to communion with Christ, and you will understand the Scriptures. The clearest revelation of the Word is Christ. If you are in communion with Him everything else will become clear to you.

On this point Catholicism is more spiritual than Protestantism. It makes communion with Christ, not the acceptance of the Scriptures, the essential point of faith. Nor can God have made salvation depend on the study, understanding and acceptance of a book. He founded the Church because communion with Christ is the only condition of salvation. Therefore one believes in the Church as one believes in Christ, that it is the community of God, as He is the Son of God.

Aided by the prayer-book which Verkade had given me when I left Beuron, I was able to follow the Catholic service fairly well. I knew that each day had its appointed saint, in whose honour Mass was said,and thus I honoured with the Church, day by day, Saint Camillus of Lellis, Saint Vincent of Paul, Saint Victor. In this way I came to the feast of Mary Magdalene on July 22nd. On that morning I went to the cathedral, and heard, kneeling, no

less than three Masses. The continual repetition of the Catholic eucharistic sacrifice presented no difficulties to me. " God is an *infinite* God, therefore he can be offered up *infinitely*," says the diary. When the *Credo* was sung at High Mass I confessed it in my heart—" with a strong feeling of *the eternal, supernatural truth* of this confession. I felt that this symbol reveals the real, essential truth, which transcends all accidental reason. For truth is of God, that is, of Being ; the apprehension by reason is only an adjustment to the world of appearances. Therefore, *by faith in the Christian symbol we adapt ourselves beyond all reason to the Essence of the world.*"

On that day I wrote home to my mother and sisters and told them that their faith was now also mine. Mogens Ballin was in Assisi, and to him I wrote that I had now acknowledged the Nicene Creed.

In the evening I went, as usual, to the acacia avenue outside the gate, and stopping at the low wall, I looked back at the town. The towers of Pistoja and the old grey palaces with the proud, stern façades and a row of windows high up beneath the flat roof were darkening against the evening air. Over the town, and over the mountains in bluish shadows behind it, the sky was golden, and flights of swallows were wheeling far away in that golden light.

Then the Angelus bells began to ring in clear or strong voices from all the towers. The powerful sound filled the air and filled my soul, and I gazed into the pure and radiant evening sky, where the swallows were wheeling like hosts of angels, and it was as though I were gazing into the opened heavens and into the golden glory of God.

I finished my evening walk by taking the letter to Svendborg and the letter to Assisi to the post office. It was just about theatre time ; young Pistojese, and ladies in evening dress were going to the opera. I felt far away from all of them—far from the world—I had sealed my fate. Later I stood at my window and looked up at the

clear, starlit sky, quiet and happy. Then lit the candle and found a letter on my table, informing me that only three hundred francs of my travelling money remained, and that I had therefore better return home. For a moment I was grieved ; I was only just beginning to get something out of my journey. But—" *fiat voluntas Dei* !" (says the diary).

## I

And then the will of God was otherwise—quite otherwise ! Those who do not believe in Providence must shudder to think by what a thread of chance human happiness or misery hangs. Two minutes sooner or later out at the front door, and one would never have met the man or the woman who decided the course of one's whole life ! An unbearable thought, if we did not know from a reliable source that " even the very hairs of our head are numbered."

I try to imagine what my life would have been, if at that time in Pistoja, perhaps after a tourist round in Florence, a hasty visit to Siena, I had returned to Denmark. I should have come back to the unsalaried editorship of *The Tower*, to continued poverty and a journalistic struggle for daily bread, without a place in any camp, and, which was worse, without sufficient support in the Christianity that was still new, vague and not firmly established in me. Without any paper to write in, without a publisher to issue my books, I would have become a literary Bohemian, would have returned to the atmosphere from which I wanted to escape. If I had not at that time gone to Assisi from Pistoja, my book about my journey, *Le Livre de la Route*, would never have been written, and I should never have written the life of Saint Francis, with all that resulted and has resulted from it to this day.

Nothing less than the whole of my future was at stake during those last days in Pistoja. And there was one who had an inkling of it. One whose pure heart and devout mind made him see more clearly than others—Mogens Ballin. The day after receiving the letter informing me that the money was ebbing out I wrote to him that I should probably not see him again on that side of the Alps. The answer came: "You must not go back to all that Danish free-thinking! What are you going to do there? You will be shipwrecked in it! If God has let it come to pass that you have no more money now, it is because I am to show you hospitality. Come to Assisi, live with me, eat at my table, let us share like brothers and stay with me as long as you like." He signed himself, not as he had hitherto done, with the name he bore before the world, but with the name given to him in baptism, Francesco—or, as he preferred to write it, with a small initial, *francesco*.

Now, after the event, I see that no other course was open to me. From a literary point of view, what could I have made of foreign travel, so arbitrary and so meagre in exterior events as that which I had now completed? In particular, what had I obtained in Italy? Genoa and Rapallo, Lucca and Pistoja, had they yielded a return for the money spent in them? I had not obtained any material for a novel, not even for a short story. Had I to admit that Ingeborg Stuckenberg was right when she said that I had gone into the melting-pot? And, worst of all, would not all the poems, the ungathered flowers in lonely, dark hours of relapse, have scorched my soul, like the strawberries of which Bettina writes: '*die Erdbeeren, die ich stehen liess, die brennen mir noch auf der Seele. . .*"

I *had* to go to Assisi, therefore I was enabled to go thither. It was the logic of Providence, therefore it was realised, which is not always the case with logic, and the tool of Providence was the helping hand that Mogens Francesco Ballin held out to me then, and which never

since then failed me, not even in death, not even beyond death. . .

Early in the morning of July 29th, the feast of Saint Olaf, the name day of my eldest son, I arrived in Perugia, where Ballin and I were to meet. In one of my books of travel I have described this first arrival in the capital of Umbria ; I take leave to insert the description here.

" The mountains take on a violet hue, the soil in which the olive trees grow becomes golden brown. A large, white star in the west, Jupiter, is the last departing sentinel of the night. The day advances rapidly ; everywhere the smoke is ascending from cottages and houses, and the peasants are beginning their work, men and women. It is important to make use of the early morning hours.

" For it is summer, the height of summer—burning, Italian summer. When the night train reached Perugia a little after six the day was already growing hot. I had travelled all night from Pistoja by way of Firenze and Terontola, and had reached my temporary destination, which took the shape of a long, low platform and two immovable railway employees. After travelling all night I was sleepy and uncomfortable in my clothes and shoes. I wanted to wash myself, and one of the quiet railway men to whom I appealed showed me the way to a yard where a little water trickled from a greenish pipe into a stone basin. There I washed myself as well as I could, using my handkerchief as a towel.

" When I stepped out of the station the sun was already high in the heavens, and it shone dazzlingly on a broad, white road leading upwards straight in front of me between two rows of large plane trees, to a town high up, a town of pale red or shining white palaces with many tall, slender towers, soaring like minarets against the blue sky.

" That is Perugia, then, so high up in the morning sun.

" On my weary feet, half dazzled by the brilliant sun

on the white dust, I begin the ascent. It is Sunday morning, and country people in their best clothes are walking like myself towards Perugia. The gay colours of the women's aprons shine in the sun ; the large yellow boots of untanned leather tread firmly in the deep dust of the road. We walk up together, like pilgrims going to Jerusalem.

" At length we draw near the first large buildings. The road passes outside them, outside the town wall along the edge of the hill-crest on which Perugia stands. On the right there are new palaces, new façades, new towers, on the left one's glance goes deep down to the olive fields and peasant farms of the Umbrian plain.

" I go through a gate which shuts me in between tall, windowless houses. Here it is suddenly cool. The street still ascends, goes under the arch of one gate after another, turns into a stairway, catches a gleam of sunshine, again plunges into cold shadow, is intersected by wonderful side-streets sinking into the depths or climbing up to the heights.

" Then all at once you are out of these nooks and crannies ; suddenly you come out beneath the arch of a gate to a broad, lively, modern corso with shops and cafés, and with many people walking on the wide pavements.

" A few steps down the Corso and I am in the cathedral square. The cathedral is on one side, the town hall on the other—two sternly beautiful and simple façades in a pure style, their square stones have that noble grey *patina* seen on old buildings in Italy.

" An imposing array of steps leads up to the cathedral. No bell is ringing, but, notwithstanding, the country people are streaming in through the wide doors to hear the morning Mass. It is eight o'clock. " I was present, too, at that morning Mass, hearing it as devoutly as I could. Then I went into the town to find Mogens Ballin."

The description given above continues :

" A little later on that day I sit on a bench at the other end of the Corso, contemplating the wide landscape from a semi-circular platform. This platform is like a large balcony from which beautiful Perugia contemplates her queendom, Umbria.

" The day has grown burning hot, the country is veiled in a sunny haze, the mountains have a blue tint. I sit here, looking into the distance ; round about me people in Sunday attire are sitting on the other benches, reading in the shade of laurels and oleanders.

" The sun climbs higher and higher and the shade recedes further and further away. It leaves the earth, abandons my dusty shoes, creeps up my trousers and my coat. At last I have only the shade that my hat gives me.

" How the sun makes my eyes smart ! The whole of the platform is covered with red gravel which glistens in the sun. And I am very sleepy. There is a sweet scent around me, a very strong sweet scent ; it reminds me of the scent of almonds. No, not almonds—it is something artificial—a perfume ; no, something in a chemist's shop.

" With that I fall asleep in the midst of the sunshine and the perfume of the blossoming trees. I do not awaken until Mogens Ballin stands before me and says, ' So here you are, sleeping like a weary tramp !' "

We walk down the Corso together. It is strange to both of us to speak Danish, though more so to him than to me, as I had spoken it with Sophus Claussen at Rapallo. " It is a queer, thick sort of language, it seems to stick in one's mouth," he says.

It is Sunday, and Ballin has not had time to hear Mass at Assisi, he therefore suggests that we go to the cathedral together. I do not tell him that I have already heard one Mass, I only follow him with quiet and obedient joy. With all my soul I am at this moment ready to accept the new faith, like the old Vikings when they submitted to being signed with the Cross in the land of the Franks.

Then a strange thing happens. I walk into the church behind Ballin, we both approach the holy water font: he dips his hand in the consecrated liquid and, according to Catholic custom, he wants to hand me the drops on his finger tips, so that I can take them from him. Not knowing this custom, I misunderstand his outstretched hand and think it means that I am not permitted to touch the water. "Do not touch the sacred thing. You are not yet worthy! *Procul profani!*" Feeling ashamed and downcast, I let my hand drop in confusion. I understand only too well that I am not worthy to dip my hand in the cooling water welling up from the springs of redemption.

The rest of the day passes under the impression of having been repulsed, of having been turned out of the place in which I had no right to be, as one not clothed in the wedding garment at the great supper.

We see but few of the many art treasures of Perugia, other than the cathedral and the façade of the Palazzo dei Priori San Bernardino, with its angels playing violins. Neither Ballin nor I were particularly interested æsthetically—we were both swayed by religious motives. On the other hand, after taking a great deal of trouble, and after many directions and many a *sù* and *giù*, *qua* and *la*, more or less understood, we found at last a convent which Ballin wanted very much to show me, a refuge for old and infirm people kept by the *Little Sisters of the Poor*.

At that time I knew nothing about that wonderful Order, which was founded in 1840 by a priest (Abbé Le Pailleur) and two devout servant-girls in the little Breton town of Saint Servan. One must read Felix Ribeyre's book (*Histoire des Petites Sœurs des Pauvres*. Paris, 1868) in which the story is related of the growth of this evangelical mustard seed to a large tree, under which thousands upon thousands of deserted and unfortunate old people sought refuge and shelter. In the course of a quarter of a century the two worthy girls, who tended

some blind women in a garret in Saint Servan, had grown into a community of 1,600 Sisters, who housed, fed and tended 12,000 old people. The poor servant-girl became Mère Marie Augustine de la Compassion, Mother General of the Order, owning 106 houses, of which 75 are in France, eight in England, three in Holland, one in Ireland, eight in Belgium, one in Switzerland, ten in Spain...

Ribeyre's book was written in 1868, and contains no mention of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Italy. They came later, and one of their houses is in Perugia.

Ballin and I stopped for a moment outside the gate, while my friend took out his note-case and put a note in his waistcoat-pocket, where he could easily get it out. "The Sisters are dependent on almsgiving," he explained to me.

Then he rang the bell; the wicket was opened, and Ballin addressed the portress in French. A gleam of joy flashed over the Sister's good, peasant-girl face, but unfortunately the fact could not be disguised that we were not of her country. It was a little disappointment to her, but it did not lessen her kindness. The Mother Prioress was sent for. She was a small middle-aged woman, whose face beneath the white coif had the same good, peasant-woman's expression as the portress sister's, and under the guidance of both the nuns we saw the convent.

First they took us to the sick wards. In each of the clean white beds lay a poor old soul, often too feeble to give any answer to the greeting of the Prioress. Many had crooked limbs, others were suffering from severe sores and ulcers. Most of them, the Prioress said, were so helpless that they had to be tended like babies.

We went through several rooms. Altogether there were eighty invalids. Some of them, who were well enough to be taken outside, we found sitting in the small, richly flowered convent garden, smiling in the sunshine or chatting with each other.

"How many sisters are there to attend to these invalids?" Ballin asked.

"We are twelve," was the answer, "and of that number two are always in the kitchen, two in the laundry, and, as a rule, two are out seeking alms. Six remain to look after the sick."

Ballin gave his alms at the door. When it was closed behind us, after many expressions of thanks, he said to me: "Six sisters, six women for eighty patients of that kind! Now I can understand what I once read about Taine, that after a visit to the same sisters in Paris he is said to have asked the Prioress: 'But whence do you get the strength for such a hard life?' They happened to be standing outside the door of the chapel; the Prioress opened it and said, 'From here, monsieur!'"

Ballin and I had also seen the private chapel in the house we had just visited; he and the Prioress had signed themselves with holy water at the entrance and genuflected to the altar in the choir with the sanctuary lamp before it. I had not dared to imitate them, and felt ashamed and grieved at not having the right to do more. How ardently did I not wish to kneel and pray as they did!

But now it was time to think of getting the train to Assisi. Before that we sat awhile together at a café—Ballin talked a great deal about freemasonry in Italy, about its hatred of the Church and its hostility to Christianity; about the progress of Socialism and the decline of Catholicism. He explained his thoughts about a victory in the near future for the revolutionary parties all over the world, of a persecution of Christianity organised by the united Socialistic republics of Europe, and then, but not till then, the victory of the Church.

Then we went on the half-hour train journey to Assisi and got out at the station on the plain near Santa Maria degli Angeli. Ballin gave my luggage to a hotel 'bus, with instructions to deliver it to the widow Filomena

Sensi in the Via Principe di Napoli. We then walked up to the sacred city. We came by a short cut between trees past the well and the shrine of the Madonna, before which a lamp is always burning, to the steep, narrow stairway leading up to the carriage road in front of the Porto San Pietro. We climbed up the steps, we went into the town and continued climbing, by steep streets, by stairways, up to the house in which Ballin lived, and which was now to be my home too. The diary records: "In the evening entered Assisi. We walked up from the station; the night was starlit and the cicada were singing. The stairs and streets of the town seemed to me to lead up to the stars."

I said so to Mogens, who was walking in front of me as my guide.

"Yes," he said, "this is the road to the kingdom of heaven!"



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# *SIGNOR GIOVANNI*

*Seigneur Jésus, ayez pitié des misérables qui se consument devant votre douloureuse face* !

LÉON BLOY.

## I

EVERYWHERE in Assisi Mogens Ballin was already known under the name of *Signor Francesco* ; as his companion I became *Signor Giovanni*. We were also frequently called " the two gentlemen who are always laughing "—" *quei due signori che sempre ridono* "—for we were not exactly quiet when we walked down the street ; we talked a great deal and loudly, disputing and laughing at each other's ideas.

Ballin had come to Assisi in consequence of a memory of his visit in the previous year with Verkade. He had at that time read a small Italian biography of the great Umbrian, and he could not fail to be struck by the resemblance between his own fate and the story of the son of Pietro Bernadone. Like Saint Francis Mogens was also the cherished son of wealthy parents ; like Saint Francis, Mogens Ballin had also led a merry life and been the leader in festive company, imitated by his admiring friends ; like Saint Francis, Mogens Ballin had felt called to a new and better life. He had therefore in baptism taken the name of his great predecessor and had come to the city of the saint, there to live after the example of Christ and Saint Francis. As an outward sign of this he had become a member of the third Order of Saint Francis and wore, next his skin, beneath his worldly

clothes, the rough scapular of the Brothers of Penance, and the cord with the three knots signifying poverty, chastity and obedience, the three Franciscan virtues.

Mogens had taken rooms in the house of a devout, elderly widow, Filomena Sensi, living in the Via Principe di Napoli, the main street in Assisi. The house is on the right hand of the street as one comes from San Francesco, between the Capella dei Pellegrini and Monte Frumentario. The front door was painted green in those days (it is now a hideous brown); you let the heavy knocker fall, and before long you heard Filomena's voice from within, asking the cautious Italian question, no longer used by young people, "*Chi è?*" When you had mentioned your name, or simply used the magic formula, "*Amici!*"—"Friends," the door was opened and you stepped into a large shady hall. On the left there was a kitchen, in which Filomena did her cooking at the large, black fireplace; on the right, the dining-room; in front, a glass door led into a sort of parlour, a *salottino* with two sofas upholstered in red, a table with a crocheted cover upon it; on the walls photographs and picture post cards fixed fan-wise with drawing-pins, and in the corner on a shelf two bunches of paper flowers and a vase of perforated alabaster, with a ball of blue cut glass on the top. It was hideous, and it was pathetic; it was like so many of the execrable Italian "salons" that horrify visitors from the north.

The "*salottino*" had a window and balcony overlooking the valley, like the two rooms next to it, allotted to Mogens Ballin. The first one was his bedroom, the other his studio. Here the commonness of the Italian furniture wrung one's heart. In the first room there was a big iron bed with coarse sheets over mattresses stuffed with maize, and with two hard pillows (those good, firm Italian pillows, not the butter-soft bags of down on which Danes heat their heads all night long!). In the whitewashed walls there were some whitewashed doors and

hatches, opening to large and small cupboards, and half-length cupboards, in which all kinds of things were cosily stowed away. In the corner there was a three-legged washstand with a basin that was far too small; the red brick floor around it was wet till late in the day because of Mogens's too generous ablutions. At the head of the bed there was a broad prie-Dieu painted brown; above it hung an Agnus Dei of old, yellow wax under glass and framed in an elaborate gilt frame; a candlestick stood on the book-rest of the prie-Dieu, there, also, lay a rosary and three or four small books of devotion in parchment bindings, Ballin's night-reading when he had gone to bed.

The studio next to this room was just as simply furnished. A few benches stood ranged against the walls; there was a table for work in the corner nearest the window; in the other corner a chest of drawers in which Ballin kept his possessions. In the middle of the floor stood the easel; here and there were books, unbound, many of them stained with tempera colouring which had accidentally got too near to them. Some photographs had been fastened up on the white walls. I remember a very large one of Duccio's Madonna with all its ecstatic heads of angels and saints. Duccio was perhaps, still more than Giotto, Ballin's artistic ideal. "Duccio and Cimabue, the pure summits," were his words in an article in *The Tower*. "I want to be a painter of saints; *imagier*, as it was called in the Middle Ages," he said to me. "The art which has not the glory of God for its object is worthless." "When one is *pénitent* one cannot be *jouisseur*, and profane art is *jouissance*," he asserted; (French expressions often came more readily to his lips than Danish ones, when speaking of religious subjects).

Ballin had chosen to live his life in Assisi and not in Copenhagen, in order the better to do penance and to escape from a life of pleasure in the artist set at home. His days at Assisi were strictly and simply mapped out. He

rose very early, went to Mass either at San Francesco's or the Capuchin chapel close by (*Domus orationis* is the inscription above the low door), then joined me at breakfast, I having dressed meanwhile. The morning was spent in work ; when I arrived he was painting a portrait in tempera of the prioress of the institution, Il Giglio, next door. There was never any meat at the midday and evening meals, and Filomena Sensi, who loved her gay and happy lodger, invented hundreds of little vegetarian dishes to please him. There were tomatoes cut in half filled with rice and fried in oil ; there were all kinds of *pasta* cooked with *pomidoro*, not with gravy ; there were *fritelli* of mashed potatoes and delicious little round *bocchoncini di riso*. At each dish good old Filomena invariably asked the same question, " *Piace Signor Francesco ?*" Not until she had been told that the food was " delicious " did she turn way with a sigh and an " *Ebbè, figlio mio !* " and go back to her kitchen to continue the practice of her art.

I did not live in the same house with Mogens Ballin, but was lodged on the other side of the street at the baker's, almost opposite Filomena's house and directly opposite the old, ever-murmuring well, *Fonte Olivieri*. I lived at the top of the house on the third floor and had two rooms, like Mogens. The inner one was my bedroom, a cell like his, but smaller. To get into it one had to go through the sitting-room, which was large and had two windows. This room was whitewashed, had a brick floor and was furnished with a large substantial table in the middle and some straw-seated chairs against the walls. Even now when I think of that room I get a home-sick longing for it ! It was a room of the good old times, of the days when people could still afford to make their houses big, with many spacious rooms ; the days when the large modern city had not yet been invented, nor the expensive, cramped little flats in which unhappy modern people go about in four or five pinched

rooms, as though in cages, and tread on each other's hearts and souls. On the broad table there was ample room for my books and papers, and when I sat at the window reading and looked up from the printed page I had a view over the faded pantiles of Assisi, over narrow lanes and old churches and town walls and city gates, and over the road to Santa Maria dei Angeli, which runs white and straight down the middle of the silver gray, olive-grown country. Lower down, near the railway station, was the dome by Vignola on the church above Portiuncula, and about twice a day the small train, looking like a toy, ran along the middle of the immense plain on the way from Foligno to Terontola, or from Terontola to Foligno. Further out in the broad land of olives soared the pink spire of the church of Rivo Torto, and beyond the plain were the mountains, the haze-blue mountains, the heights between the Tiber and Topino, with the towns of Bettona and Montefalco.

Ballin came over and fetched me the first morning. I still remember him as when he came into my bedroom (I had not got up) with his bright greeting, "Good morning poet!" his handsome face radiant with youth and the joy of a pure soul. I perceived that in him I was in the presence of one who was in tune with existence, and I strongly felt my own want of peace, my sluggishness and apathy. We went to San Francesco's and saw the frescoes in the upper church; for the first time I stood before Giotto, the great painter of souls; for the first time I was presented to his young, gentle Saint Francis, that beautiful, simple boy, who accepts the homage of the madman as genuine, who has great thoughts about himself, believes in everything he sees in dreams or hears in prayer, and sells his fine cloth for what the crafty and abominable old Foligno merchant will pay him for it.[1]

[1]Of necessity I insert a learned commentary here, because art connoisseurs and Franciscan scholars will contend that Giotto did not paint any fresco of the subject mentioned. From Adolfo Venturi (*Storia dell' Arte Italiana* v, 246) to the widely read "Guides" to Assisi (see e.g.

From the upper church and the frescoes Mogens and I went down the worn stone steps of the narrow indoor stairway to the lower church. It was on the 30th July, only two days before the great Portiuncula feast day, and the pilgrims were already arriving. A little group of

Lina Duff Gordon : *The Story of Assisi*, London, 1909, p. 231), all are agreed in interpreting the second fresco of the life of Saint Francis erroneously. It represents, it is usually said, Saint Francis giving his cloak to a poor man. Venturi asserts, as do the others after him, that it represents the scene which is described by Bonaventura and Thomas of Celano as follows : " It happened one day that he met a poor and almost naked soldier and, moved with compassion, for Christ's sake he gave him his own costly garments." (Thomas à Celano, *Vita Secunda*, p. 1, cap. ii, n. 5 ; d'Alençon ed., p. 171.) After reading this text one ought to look at a reproduction of the fresco. What ! This slightly stooping figure, this middle-aged man, who with the air of an expert feels the material, while closely scanning the expression in the face of his young, inexperienced client—is this a soldier ? And a *poor* soldier at that, " almost naked." Why, he is *well-dressed*, this poor warrior ! On his head he wears a good green biretta, and he is dressed in a handsome red tunic, girdled with a leather belt, and has brown boots on his feet. There is certainly no need for pity here, nor does the expression on young Francesco's face suggest it. The original accounts relate, further, that the saint took off his garment (others say his armour), and gave to his less well accoutred brother-in-arms. But this is no suit of armour, hardly even a costume (one sees a sleeve !) which Saint Francis is parting with here ; it is most of all a piece of cloth, so many yards of material, which he is about to sell. The scene which Giotto has wished to represent is to be found elsewhere in Thomas à Celano (*Vita Prima*, p. i, cap. 4) and it is the well-known story of how the young man, the son of a cloth merchant, sells some of his father's goods to a rival merchant in Foligno in order to obtain money to restore San Damiano. (See my book on *Saint Francis of Assisi*, English translation, Longmans, Green & Co.) The horse seen in the picture is not a prancing steed, but a meek beast of burden which has carried the cloth on the long journey (from Assisi to Foligno). The two rosy pink little towns in the background of the fresco may very well be intended to represent Spello and Foligno.

Further, while I am being learned, I may perhaps add one more correction to the usual interpretation of Giotto's series of frescoes in the upper church. The *twelfth* fresco is generally explained as " Saint Francis in ecstasy " ; Venturi finds no source for this, but is of opinion that the composition has been derived from the current representations of *Moses on Sinai*. Unwittingly he is on the right track here ; in all probability the fresco represents Saint Francis on the *Sinai of Franciscanism*, Fonte Colombo, and the scene which Giotto has portrayed is that with which we are acquainted from the *Speculum perfectionis*, in which Christ appears above the sessile-flowered oak outside the hermitage of the saintand approves his complaint of the guardians who are dissatisfied with his rule. I give the

peasants had gathered about a table which had been placed in the north transept; one by one they came forward, laid money on the table, the dirty one and two lire notes current in those days, a black-robed monk receiving the money and entering the amounts in a book. "It is for Masses that they want to be said," Mogens explained to me, without the slightest concern for my northern ideas about Tetzel's fund for indulgences, and the consequent risk of an attack of Protestant scandalisation. "That is Padre Felice, sitting behind the table," Mogens continued. "Come, and I will introduce you to him."

That morning beneath the vaultings of San Francesco I looked into your blue eyes for the first time, Padre Felice! You remained seated behind your table, occupied as you were with your work, but you smiled with your finely chiselled lips, offered me your hand and said, in the voice that was at once courteous and cordial, in your Dutch French: "Signor Francesco's friend is also *my* friend!"

"How handsome he is," were my first words to Ballin, when we were out of hearing, "A Goethe head!"

"But not a Goethe heart!" Mogens retorted.

Then he told me a little about my new friend. Mogens had made the Father's acquaintance on his first visit to Assisi. He was a Dutchman like Verkade, besides being the confessor of the foreigners, so that there were plenty of points of contact. When Mogens came back this time he had again met Padre Felice; it was through him that he had found his landlady, Filomena. "At first he seemed

narrative here, in the words in which I translated it at the time (idem, p. 226): "Then Saint Francis lifted up his voice and cried: 'Oh, Lord, do thou answer for me!' And they all heard the voice of Christ in the air, saying, 'Francis, there is nothing in the rule that is thine, but it is all mine, whatsoever it is, and it shall be kept according to the letter, with no interpreting, no interpreting! And whoso will not keep the rule, let him leave the Order.' Then Saint Francis turned to his brethren and said to them, 'Have ye heard it? Have ye heard it? Or must it be said once again to you?' And they went away in great fear."

to me to be far too polite, so extremely formal ; you will probably think the same. But I learned to know him in the confessional. I learned how to value his great, warm heart. He is a real *father* !"

Besides being a confessor Padre Felice was also head sacristan (it was in this capacity that he kept a register of the Mass offerings). He was, moreover, priest of a small parish in the mountains. "I was out there once with him," said Mogens ; "it was wonderful ! We must go there together. It's called La Rocca."

While Mogens was talking we had by steadily ascending streets reached the higher part of Assisi, where the old, decayed church of San Lorenzo stands, and where the pavement of the streets merges into the stony mountain. It was getting towards noon, the sun was hot, but the fresh breeze rarely absent from Assisi swept over the grass fields about the old ruined castle and brought us the scent of much flowering thyme. From the height we looked down into the valley of the Tescio, where the river flows green deep down between violet rocks. Then the clocks in the towers of the cathedral and the town hall struck twelve in the town below us, and from all the great and small towers in Assisi the Angelus bells pealed.

A single frail little bell was the first to begin, far too soon, like a schoolchild eager to show what he can do. Not for long, though, was it allowed to ring alone ; one by one they all joined in, all the silver bells of Assisi, all the golden bells of Assisi, all the clear crystal bells of Assisi, all the booming and clanging doom-day bells of Assisi, all the joyous, bright, happy, exulting and blissful heavenly bells of Assisi. . . From the extreme north to the furthest south of Assisi the sound runs like a fire in grass ; everywhere the clear tones soar like bright flames in the air. Santa Chiara rings out below Pincio. San Francesco answers from far away in the Colle del Inferno. San Pietro and Santa Maria del Vescovado peal

long and exultingly, San Rufino rings deeply and soberly. Santa Maria sopra Minerva, San Quirico, Sant' Apollinare, Chiesa nuova, Francescuccio, the church of the Capuchins, the chapel of the Colettines, the convent of the German nuns, Sant' Andrea, Santa Margherita—all the high towers and all the small belfries, in which one sees the bells swinging in and out, all of them ring, all of them chime, all of them rejoice, all of them play before the Lord and praise His holy Mother: Ave Maria, gratia plena. " Hail, Mary, full of grace, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus !"

I turned to Mogens to express what I felt. He was standing with bared head in the sunshine, his face hidden in his hands ; I understood that he was praying.

## II

It was the evening of the same day. The door of Filomena's house had closed behind me ; I had said goodnight to Mogens and was now walking the few steps across the street to the house in which I lived. It was already dark, the old-fashioned street lamp, hanging under the arch which leads from Via Principe di Napoli to the Via dei Aromatari, was lit. I walked slowly past the beautiful columns of Monte Frumentario and past the purling well, where a couple of women were standing and drawing water in their copper *concas*.

Mogens and I had spent the afternoon amongst the pilgrims. We had seen all the confessionals in the lower church besieged by impatiently waiting crowds ; we had seen a few impatient penitents push others aside and set up a little fight to get first to the lattice. *Fighting* for a chance to confess one's sins ! . . The men went to confession in the sacristy ; it was done without much ceremony ; the Father who heard confessions was seated on a chair, the penitent knelt at his side and whispered into his ear. Behind the penitent, and thronging closely

round him, stood others, waiting for their turn. I looked at them, big strong men with weather-beaten faces, red throats and necks ; there they stood in rows, in a queue, waiting patiently and without a word, ranged as one is ranged elsewhere before the ticket-office of a theatre or music-hall, waiting solemnly and calmly for the moment when they too would be allowed to kneel at the feet of the priest, and with their heads on his shoulder tell him all the sin, all the shame, the anguish and distress of their souls. I looked at the motionless face of the priest ; his forehead and eyes were screened by his right hand, but the mouth could be seen, the stern line of the lips broken now and then by a soft ripple when, inaudibly to the others, he spoke, admonished, comforted, imposed penance and at last with raised hand made the sign of the cross and pronounced the absolution.

" Isn't it wonderful ?" Mogens had asked eagerly. Yes, it *was* wonderful ! and the power that could bring human beings to this must be rooted in something beyond Nature. In heaven or in hell, that was the question—but in any case it was not the work of man !

I went upstairs and lit my lamp (my tall lamp with four burners). Amongst the letters on the table there was also one from Viggo and Ingeborg Stuckenberg which I had received in Pistoja. I read it through again and suddenly it seemed paltry. In its train of thought there was a resting satisfied with life as it was, and I felt that it must be possible to reach something higher. Ingeborg had exhorted me not to have other gods than the one, true one—myself ! But, as Hello said, we did not love ourselves, for we submitted to being unhappy ; we even preferred unhappiness ! I remembered Ingeborg's jestingly serious words to me once, shortly after she had been married : " It's much more fun being unhappy !" In my inmost heart I felt like her—otherwise, why was I drawn as though to an abyss when I read the words of the English poet :

And much of sin and more of woe,
And horror the soul of the plot.

It was what Poe had called *the imp of the perverse*, the direction towards perdition, towards the devil, " the enemy," as he is so characteristically called in the Gospel. " What I was longing for was shipwreck and famine, death or captivity among barbarian hordes, a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears, upon some grey and desolate rock, in an ocean unapproachable and unknown," says one of the heroes of the great, morbid American about himself. To go to ruin, to be shipwrecked, to be lost was what he wanted, is what many want, and was often what I wanted.

Under the influence of thoughts like these I wrote my answer to my two friends :

Dear Viggo and Ingeborg,

I thank you very much and very sincerely for the letter you sent me. But what am I to answer to it? Ingeborg writes, " Look back ! We *have* been happy!" Yes, we have, in the midst of years of doubt and sadness we have had bright oases of sunshine and youth. But that was *given*, not deserved. We had only to open our senses to inhale happiness at every pore. And we deserve blame because we were not *happy enough*. Read *Valraven* or *The Tree of Life* and say whether we were happy *enough*.

Hello says in his masterly way : " *L'âme est faite pour la pâture divine.*" And in another place : " *Dieu seul peut combler le désir de l'âme.*"

This is infinitely true. Every time we have found happiness in the contemplation of Nature or the joy of art it has been because we forgot ourselves in beholding beauty, i.e. God. The condition for living a wholly happy life is the same : *to forget one's self.*

Here I express exactly the opposite of what we have hitherto been taught : " Thou shalt have none other

gods before thyself." I know, as well as anyone, this arrogant little worship of self, and I know whither it leads. And you know too : it leads to the abyss.

I am not attacking art, I am not attacking beauty, but I do attack the worship of self, the divinity of self ; the endless desire and longing of the soul remains everlastingly unsatisfied so long as we seek for rest in ourselves. All true joy is conditional on our seeking it outside ourselves, in that which is eternal. That is the condition, that is the way, that is the gate. Only the pure in heart shall see God.

We humble ourselves every time we admire beauty, and that is our greatest happiness. Let us also humble ourselves before revealed truth and we shall find the highest blessedness, the deepest peace.

It is peace that we seek—not the peace of sleep, but of health.

It is of that peace that Master Eckhardt writes: " If anyone desire that I should relate what the Creator intended when he made all creatures, I answer : Rest. If I am asked a second time what all creatures seek in their natural impulses and desires, I answer again, rest."

But this rest is no dead calm. It is exactly the opposite—it is that point which Archimedes tried to find, the point from which one can move the earth.

Yours,

J. J.

Stuckenberg answered me with a letter which showed that he had already reached that Stoic Pantheism to which he confessed as his religion two years later, in a wreath of poems addressed to me.

Although the letter was not written until a month later, I insert it here, in the context to which it belongs. It read as follows :

Lyngby, August 25th, '94.

My dear Friend,

I believe I am going to do something foolish, but I am going straight at it. I answer you at once, without having given the matter half an hour's thought. Perhaps you think that that alone is reason enough to slay me. Strike if you want to! I am a slippery eel, and in my eel's conceit I imagine the frying-pan has not yet been made on which I can lie still and die miserably.

I take your letter at haphazard, then, and attempt to answer you, not to convince you on any point—that is evidently quite impossible—but only to tidy up my own thoughts. And why, by the way, should we try to convince each other? As if there were ever two boots exactly alike. But when you say that the happiness of our young days was a gift and not a merit, I feel as if I were on skates and had to perform two very long curves, one with each leg, and each going a long way out from the other. For, as I see it, our happiness then was neither the one nor the other, but, on the other hand, it was the best that we could produce ourselves. So there you are—self-worship at its height! And if you say that we were wrong in not being happy enough, I turn round and skate backwards and answer, Yes, we were, we were exactly as happy as we were capable of being and our capacity was greater than everybody else's.

When you refer to *Valraven* and *The Tree of Life*, I think you are making a mistake. For who says that happiness is the same as joy? Our happiness consists in this, that we have the power to love our life, even its blackest grief. I would not be without a single happening, not exchange a single despair for all imaginable joy, not at any price. And I love my life as the tree loves its root, because it has made me what I am; yes, in my inmost heart in fact, because I love myself. What do you mean by saying that the worship of

self leads to the abyss? I am not conscious at all of that abyss. To leave one's self seems to me chiefly to lead into the void. Understand me, I am speaking of ourselves, not about our art and its means of expression.

You will never get me away from myself, or from my Self, from the precious mirror of my soul, from its soft seed-catching forest soil. So far as I am concerned we can quite well use the word God, but God is then *within* me and not outside me, and there is then only one God for me, he who is in *me*. Possibly others also have a god within them, but I have nothing to do with him. To seek for rest ouside oneself, is, I believe, a delusion. Do you believe that such rest will support you in decisive moments? Rest in yourself, in the fulness of your own being, as the sun rests in its own light. You carry peace in your own capacity for peace, and if you find it in Nature, it is because your heart opens the portals which are commonly kept closed. No prophet has preached any other God than the one within himself. But all prophets have failed in this, that they wanted or believed everybody to be alike and like themselves. And many people were nothing at all; they were therefore able to swallow a god of a soul that was a stranger to them, as they had neither a soul nor a god themselves.

And—well, now I am coming to art—whither is art led, in what you preach? He alone is an artist who sees new things and teaches something new, and stands as a new soul, never seen before. I am thinking at this moment of your letter. Read it again some time and you will say it is all old and well known! The poetry of the sacred words is accepted once and for all. So far as I care a poet may believe what he likes and mould anew, but then the metal must be melted so that the old forms are not retained—if you are able to do that, I shall reverence the poet in you more than

I do already. But for the present I am on that point an obstinate doubter.

It is dangerous to write letters about things of this kind. Now, do not take these words as if I had tried to throw stones at your church windows. To my last hour I will repeat that whatever the attitude you may think it fitting to take with me, I shall remain the same, that is to say, all through this life, your friend,

VIGGO STUCKENBERG.

That Stuckenberg was deeply and sincerely interested in what was going on in me is shown by a letter which he wrote at about the same time to Sophus Claussen, and of which the latter sent me an extract. On the occasion of a number of *The Tower* in which Claussen had published some sonnets (later printed in *Antonius in Paris*), and I the first chapters of my mediæval-modern novel, Stuckenberg wrote :

" Your sonnets have filled me, as gold fills a dreary purse, and your interview words " (to a Danish journalist who had looked up Claussen in Rome) " have wrapped me in good happiness. It seems that it really is beginning to rain in the desert, and we sparse palms are putting forth leaves to the astonishment of the monkeys. Johs. has in the same number some prose, which swings me along with him, not exactly in the tendency of this prose at present, but in his strangely warm lunar nature. I run about like a dog that has had prussic acid when I think that he has taken my little handful of gravel as a shower of stones against him. Why in the world must we part for the sake of these violent opinions ? In 1884 the gods made us meet, and the wooden paling is still standing, behind which the sun is shining and the burdocks growing and where we can meet in common joy. There is only this difference between him and me, that the youth from which you are bleeding to death has only come to me now. I went

early into the card-house of happiness, while you others were out in the cold. Now I come creeping out backwards and look about me with a smile that is perhaps a little malicious. Do not speak too loudly about the steel in me. The rapier that I possess is so flexible; it goes round myself and thrusts its point into my own heart.

"I am very loth to take a gloomy view of things. But when Johs. is silent because I have talked about shying stones, everything gets so close and besmirched for me. We are all ships on fire, even if the cargo is different. What the deuce does it matter whether one is carrying silver to the impoverished, and the other is burning up as a pirate? While I am writing this Ingeborg is reading *The Tower* and enjoying you and him as only she can, and Johs. is sitting with a letter from her, in which, amongst words as warm as if they came from the heart of the earth, there is the word "turncoat." And he broods over that word and forgets the warmth. Now when human beings have a soul, why do they sit and twist it into a point between their fingers like a lump of stupid dough? If only one had hands to keep the hearts of men beautiful and pure!"

The closing lines of the letter testify to Stuckenberg's own pure and beautiful heart:

"There is a little pond at the roadside which looks up at the sky; it is blue to-day and grey to-morrow. Every evening this summer it breathed its white elfin vapours up about the crowns of two aged willow-trees. It is looking up now at the cool depth of the sky like a little circle of rest and peace that cannot be deceived, reflecting its willows and sometimes the white belly of a flying swan and huge masses of clouds high up, and sometimes only a floating wooden shoe."

This letter was written on the 15th of August. On that day the Catholic Church keeps the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven. On the evening before I had sat at my window and seen the bonfires—as in Denmark on St. John's Eve—being lit on the plain and on the mountains. In the morning of the feast day Mogens and I had been to High Mass in Santa Maria degli Angeli, and as we climbed up towards Assisi we had talked about Denmark and about our friends at home, who were now on the way to becoming enemies. I had mentioned Stuckenberg's words in his first letter: "I wish I knew that you looked with the same passion as I at the soil and the woods of this earth and—I dare to say it—with the same *coarseness*"; and Ballin had answered gravely, "Rarely does the devil speak to us in terms so plain!" To Ingeborg's words about *struggle* as the highest I had myself added the comment, "Yes, the struggle to make others as unhappy as ourselves!"

When I was alone, however, I often took out the letters and read them again. It was my past that spoke to me from these pages, written in Viggo Stuckenberg's large, clear, connected and reliable handwriting—a handwriting I loved! How many an envelope with this writing upon it had not brought me light and happiness, solace and comfort in my dark room in town, or when I sat on the bench in the garden in Svendborg and the screams of the evening swallows about the spire of Our Lady's church awakened too many memories, called up too much of the past. To see this writing here in Assisi was like looking into Stuckenberg's deep, dark-blue eyes, see his delicate lips curling into a smile that was "perhaps a little malicious," and hear his voice in all its gentle sincerity. How warmly and honestly did not this heart beat for me; how delicately did he not feel with me, and how sincerely grieved was he not to have hurt me! What did I want more, what was I seeking beyond, when the earth offered me this?

Thus spoke doubt. But in the full light of truth it was clear to me that Stuckenberg was a greater poet, a more original soul than I. To discover this it was enough to place our letters side by side. Mine was short, dry, without any personal warmth or fulness, which I had tried to make up for by quotations. Stuckenberg's letters were rich in ideas, overflowing with orginality in expression, personal to the last jot. By the side of the threadbare aridity of my style his prose was like silk interwoven with gold, heavy, almost stiff in its metaphor, and yet flexible like the steel he spoke about. The little description of the pond in the letter to Claussen was a poem in prose, which, had I been its author, I would solemnly have had put into print.

More strongly than ever did I feel the limitations of my nature. I had at one time compared myself to Dædalus—would not Icarus have been a better symbol? My wings had only been glued on, they had not grown from my shoulders, and therefore I now fell down. He who is minted like a penny will never become a crown piece, and I was not minted to be a superman—only to be a Christian. "Many people are nothing at all, therefore they are able to swallow the god of a soul that is a stranger to them; they have neither a soul nor a god of their own," Stuckenberg wrote. Was not this the sentence passed on me—as it was the sentence on my new friends, a Verkade, a Ballin? They could not become anything great as artists, and so they went into a monastery, became good?

This was the conflict carried on in me between two contending wills—the will to return to my first youth, to the time when I (as Ingeborg Stuckenberg wrote) "was a mournful young man who needed no one"—and the will to become a Christian because I was good for nothing else.

## III

*I was good for nothing else*—the whole secret of predestination is expressed in this sentence! What the Holy Scriptures had said about the great saint was true, and it could also be applied to me, "The Lord has called me from my mother's womb, he thought of my name before I was born. . . He laid me aside like an arrow that he has chosen, and kept me hidden in his quiver." A Stuckenberg, a Claussen, could be allowed to live and die as free-thinkers; I could not! For some reason or other unknown to me the Almighty had reckoned in His economy with such an insignificant person as J. J. from Svendborg—he, just he, and no other, was to abandon his free-thinking and take the road to Canossa, the road to Rome. That I might take a fancy to stray into small by-paths on the way was reckoned with by the Authorities; I was quickly led back to the right track, as the walk of a beetle is guided with a straw by a human hand.

The account of the three months which I spent in Assisi in the society of Mogens Ballin and Padre Felice could therefore be described by a diagram showing a zigzag line, which, though it diverges more or less to the sides, keeps in one definite direction, somewhat like the line drawn by a seismograph. A series of revolts of the soul, a continually renewed rebellion of feelings, of sentimentality, at times also of the senses, was repressed again and again with a firm hand by a higher and stronger power, that supernatural force which breaks into human souls, and having once gained an entrance is not to be driven out again. *Gratia*, the terrible *Charitas*, which is not satisfied until it has driven out all other love from the soul and burns alone in the heart which its fires have purified. This was the dangerous adversary with whom I was contending, and it was clear that I was not to escape from him until—by gentle means or by force I had yielded up myself, forsaken my past, my longings and memories,

the poetry of my youth and the friends—all, all, I had to give up, " until the last farthing." Not till *that* had happened would I be able to do anything—would I become what I should never have become as a Rationalist and free-thinker . . . that for which I was destined from all eternity, and which was really the *only* thing I was good for—a fighter in the cause of the Catholic Church, a biographer of Catholic saints, a Catholic poet. " Whoso will lose his life shall find it." " He who leaves himself and all that is his, shall receive it back a hundredfold." That " hundredfold "—*quel dolce cento*, as Saint Catherine says—I have received it! The Gospel has not lied. . .

But in 1894 I could not yet know that this would come to pass, and the temptation to turn back from the path I had entered upon was often strong. " Was it for this I was in Italy," said a voice within me, " to live the life of a monk and study the Catechism?" One evening Ballin and I were walking through the old streets in the highest part of Assisi, between Santa Maria delle Rose and San Stefano. All the houses here are of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with façades of roughly-hewn stone —the rose-pink or violet or dark brown stone of Assisi, worn smooth by the years and hundreds of years that have passed over them. The doors and windows are in the purest pointed style; in the walls can be seen closed up arches, where the dead had been brought out in the Middle Ages, when the gate was walled up to hinder the spirit from finding its way in again. Foliage and roses hang down over the high garden walls, capers grow between the stones in large, dark green round-leaved bushes full of stiff, pale lilac-coloured flowers with a star of stamens in the middle. Low, green-painted doors lead as though furtively into these enclosed gardens—and one of these doors was standing open on that evening; in the doorway stood a beautiful girl, with black hair and black eyes, with a white blouse over her full bosom, and as we two young men passed by she said " *Buona sera* "

and looked at us with an enticing glance. Behind her was the garden, green and luxuriant, with arum lilies about a small fountain, with foliage of vine and fig in great abundance, exotic and Oriental in its enclosed voluptuous atmosphere. " I did not know that hussies lived in this street," said Mogens in a hard voice, when we had passed the door leading into fairyland.

It is related of Brother Leone, the bosom friend of Saint Francis, that he once asked himself whether the Master had ever had anything to do with women. Mogens often gave one the same impression of virginity, of belonging to that great company, of whom it is said in the Apocalypse that " they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, because they have never defiled themselves with women " (Apocalypse xiv, 4). It would be impossible to imagine greater contrasts than Sophus Claussen—for whom the erotic was the highest, the very revelation of divinity—and Ballin, to whom it was the enemy that had to be conquered, the serpent whose head had to be crushed. As for myself, I swung like a comet about these two poles ; I had not yet found the one central point of my orbit. Yet I was drawn more and more to Ballin's view, to his standpoint and centre—now repelled by the uncompromising hostility with which he declared it, now receding, then again drawing near, attracted by this very *intransigeance*. For it could be said of him as it was said of his divine Kinsman according to the flesh, " He spoke as one having authority and not as the scribes."

Often, though, his teaching was a " hard saying—who can hear it ?" It was hard to hear him say, " I hope day by day to become more and more restricted." It was hard to hear him declare that he no longer cared about the beauty of Nature, and that he " considered it a task laid upon him to disinterest himself in all art, his own included." It was hard to hear him speak with contempt about " the silly enthusiasm about the twinkling of the

stars," and denounce moonlight as "uncanny" and "unwholesome." It was hard to see him open Baudelaire, read the first line in the sonnet *Nous aurons des lits profonds et pleins de parfums*, and close the book with the words: "This kind of reading won't do for Tertiaries."

All this was hard, because I had not yet understood at all that Christianity demands a choice and a sacrifice. I had read, certainly, but never understood and never applied to myself the parable about the pearl of great price, which was so valuable that a merchant would do well in selling *all that he had* in order to buy it. I wanted the pearl—but did not care to pay very much for it, still less to give up all my spiritual possessions. In spite of all my sad experiences, I still had "an open eye" for the many and varied values of life, and did not know yet which to choose of all the bundles of hay around me. It was necessary to put a stop to all this excessive responsiveness to pleasing invitations; I would have to learn to be one-eyed, to wear blinkers, if necessary to tear out my eyes. I had to become—like Ballin—absolute and restricted, and to accustom myself to the evangelical Either-or, so opposed to the modern Yes-and-no-in-one-breath.

Perhaps in order to help me to a decision, perhaps without any ulterior thought, Ballin at that time handed me the works of Léon Bloy. At home, in Denmark, in the blackest nights of my despair, I had read *Le Désespéré*. I now read *Sueur de Sang*, *Christophe Colomb devant les Taureaux*, *Le Salut par les Juifs*, as well as a series of articles published in *La Plume* and *Le Mercure de France*; later, I think, collected in the book, *Belluaires et Porchers*.

In an essay which I wrote that summer for *Tilskueren* I tried to give an outline of Bloy as a literary personality. What I could not say then, because I did not know it, it is fitting to add here. Ernest Hello taught me *to think* as a Catholic, and I have acknowledged my indebtedness to

him in *Our Lady of Denmark*[1] amongst other places. Léon Bloy taught me *to feel* as a Catholic, and it is time to acknowledge this debt also, before " the old man on the mountain," who must by now (to use one of his own expressions) be " between eighty and five hundred years old," passes hence.

Meanwhile, not only by his example, not only by introducing me to the works of Léon Bloy, did Ballin try to help me. Immediately after my arrival in Assisi the great feast of indulgences at Portiuncula was celebrated on the first and second of August. We took part in it : he as one of the faithful, I as a spectator, first up at San Francesco's in Assisi, afterwards down in the large, light pilgrimage church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, which is built over the Portiuncula chapel. We spent almost the whole of the first day there : now in the church where the pilgrims came in a steady stream through the porch above which is inscribed : " *Haec est porta vitae aeternae* " ; now outside among the market booths, purchasing naïve woodcuts of Saint Francis and Saint Clare, buying rosaries and medals for Ballin's Catholic friends, buying small crosses of mother-of-pearl from Naples, with the picture of the saint of Assisi roughly carved in the silvery bright surface. We had lunch at the tables, above which there were poles with whole roasted pigs hanging from them, a slice being sold at a couple of soldi. We had our meal standing amongst unshaven peasants and women with gaily-coloured kerchiefs ; refreshing ourselves afterwards with a huge slice of water-melon, rosy pink, full of black kernels, delicious to look at—" but it tastes like the smell of washing-day," said Mogens.

" If I had not been a Catholic," he went on, " I should now have been strolling about with a cigarette between my lips, watching the life of the people and finding it interesting and *curieux*. Now I am not an outsider. I

[1] Translated into French under the title of *Vita Vera*.

am one with the life going on here ; I believe the same as these worthy people ; I can, like them, by my prayers drag the souls of my dear dead from purgatory !"

Then he explained to me what indulgences meant, passing on to speak of confession and of the Sacrament of the Altar. " Christ," he said, " made use of all the forms and thoughts at hand—in baptism, for instance, and in the Holy Supper. Both are Jewish customs which He developed further. The thought of the *eaten god* is also found among Hindus and Persians (Haoma-Soma), in Greek mysteries and African religions. These myths, this superstition, if you like, prepared the way for the truth, made the Christian dogma easy to understand, easy to accept."

He further explained to me about the catacombs ; how Catholic doctrine is already found expressed in paintings and inscriptions. He railed at the scepticism of the rationalists in regard to primitive Christian writings, to memorials of primitive Christianity. " They will gladly accept *everything* else, only not them ! " He told me that Luther had not by any means found the Word of God laid on the shelf (as Grundtvig had so positively asserted), but that over thirty translations of the Bible were in existence before the Reformation in Germany alone.

Altogether it was evident that Ballin was well-informed, and I had no fault to find with his teaching. Together we saw the miraculous rose-bush, and I made no objections when my friend told me that the roses have had no thorns since that night when Saint Francis, in order to overcome temptation, threw himself naked into it, and that their leaves are still stained as though with his blood. Deeply impressed, I saw the pilgrims from southern Italy set out on their return homewards, with their large crucifix in front ; carrying their tall cross-headed staffs they walked away backwards, singing towards the little chapel in which they had obtained forgiveness of their sins, and which they wanted to see as long as they could. *Evviva Maria ! Maria evviva !* And for once, only once, my

Protestantism not daring more, I followed my friend on his path through Portiuncula, where the silver hearts gleamed from the bare walls and the golden flames of the candles on the altar stood motionless in an atmosphere of burning silence. Once, only once, through the chapel, between kneeling and prostrate figures upon which one almost trod,—one, only one genuflection to the altar glimpsed behind the wrought-iron screen, against which the closely thronged, silent motionless figures were at prayer,—then out of the chapel, out of the stream of pilgrims, out of the church. . .

A strange peace settled upon me as we walked together up the road from Santa Maria degli Angeli to Assisi. It was near sunset—up there stood the church and convent of the saint, *il sagro convento*, golden yellow, as though carved out of old ivory or wrought in beaten gold. Up there stood the town of the saint, rose pink and violet in the glow of the setting sun, its old houses and its churches and convents rising in terrace above terrace like a vine-covered hill. There was the mountain of the saint, Monte Subasio with Carceri in its wooded glen, and at the foot, amongst the olive-trees, San Damiano ; in the evening light the huge dome of the mountain was mauve and pink with blood-red streaks that were stony paths or furrows formed by rain-torrents. " This is the city that is set on a hill and that cannot be hid," I said to Mogens. In the evening when I was alone in my room, from which I looked out across Umbria and heard the murmur of Fonte Olivieri in the street below, I wrote in my diary : " Not for many years have I felt such happiness as on this day. Lord, Lord, I thank thee and praise thee with all my poor heart !"

## IV

A small carriage was being driven out of Porto San Francesco, a small one-horse carriage with one seat and

room for two persons. The carriage contained three persons, however—Mogens Ballin and his friend, Signor Giovanni, and between them on an ingeniously contrived board, Padre Felice, who was the driver. Mogens demurred at the reverend father having so uncomfortable a seat, and offered to exchange with him, but our Dutch friend would not hear of it, and with him guiding the horse our little carriage was soon at the foot of the hill on which Assisi stands, and rolling on across Ponte San Vittorino, where the image of the Blessed Virgin received due salutation, then turning into the road to Petrignano. Our destination was Padre Felice's small country parish of La Rocca, of which Ballin had spoken to me, and which was also called Rocca Sant' Angelo or Rocchicinola. Every Saturday he went out to it, spent the night there, said Mass on Sunday morning and then returned to Assisi. We were invited to go with him and to sleep at the monastery.

We travelled, then, through the sunny Umbrian country along roads that were white with the dust of August. Oaks grew along the borders of the road, behind them there were olive fields and vine fields, here and there peasant farms with outside stairs, large, yellow hive-shaped ricks and peasants busily at work on the *aja*, the large, paved threshing-floor fenced in by a low wall. We passed through the small, grey, strangely tumble-down hamlet of Palazzo ; we cast an admiring glance at an avenue of cypresses leading to a villa ; we drove slowly past the churchyard of Petrignano, while Mogens and Padre Felice with bared heads said a *De profundis* for the dead within it. Assisi had disappeared behind us, but Perugia was drawing near—Perugia and the great bare mountain of Tezio and the small towns in the valley of the Tiber : Civitella, Ripa, San Gregorio. Then we turned our backs on Perugia and followed the Chiagio river, which was almost dry ; in its broad, stony bed there were only a few green pools left of the waters of the

winter. The river was on our left; on our right there was a mountain, on its heights appearing first one town, old and grey, with walls and towers, Sterpeto; then another, smaller, half-way down the slopes of the mountain, decayed, and grey like a swallow's nest: La Rocca. It could be seen but for a moment, then it disappeared again behind projecting heights. The road began to ascend, the horse had hard work to pull the carriage, we got down; climbed over a crest—the road between went between oak-woods and olive-fields—down into a valley where a brook ran between poplars—across a bridge, then again upwards. The horse pulled and pulled; we pushed on, from the fields behind we heard voices giving greeting, "*Buon giorno, Padre Felice* ! *Ben tornato* !" One more last effort and horse and carriage were happily brought up to Bicchiabugo's little farm, where a shady stable and an armful of hay awaited the animal. We others had still some way to climb up through the village to the monastery at the top.

For the first time, then, I walked through the street of La Rocca, which is most of all like the bed of a brook, full of stones, or a ravine, full of boulders, between two steep, grey, half-decayed walls of rock. Here and there doors and porches stand open—some leading into stables where dark grey pigs wander grunting in and out; some into kitchens from which issues smoke, smelling of juniper brushwood or laurel twigs crackling on the fire. Everything is up and down; everything is in stairs and landings and down the steps, down the rocky pavement come the young daughters of La Rocca, healthy and rosy, with the white or gaily coloured *fazzoletto* tied closely about their peach-bloom cheeks, their eyes and teeth flashing a greeting. Their bare, dusty feet tread firmly; on their heads some of them carry a basket full of heavy washing, some a *conca* with water from the spring. The street goes under an archway, widens out into a sort of courtyard

where the more well-to-do families live, in houses with sunshine, with high stairways leading up above the stables to the kitchen and the living rooms. One or two more nooks and crannies, and we are out of the town. One more turn of the road, and we are above the town, whence we can look down across the towers of the old grey castle, in which people live like owls in ruins, and we walk into the small Chiostro which has a double row of white arches round a garden in the middle. Eugenio advances to welcome us, and Padre Felice gives his faithful servant a friendly pat on the shoulder. Mogens and I follow them through the cool and shady white cloisters, where there is a scent of hay. Soon we are seated in the roomy kitchen behind the broad table, with our backs to the wall. Eugenio is at the fireplace, making coffee for us. After coffee we go over to the church ; it is in one of the four wings of the monastery, and there is an entrance not only from outside but also by a little side-door from the monastery beneath the western arcades. Behind the High Altar we see the wonderful *Flight into Egypt*, painted by a disciple of Giotto, or perhaps by the master himself ; we see *Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve*, by the same hand—and round the church and in the small confraternity chapel, besides all the other frescoes from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, no less than seven different Madonnas (besides that above the altar, *the Madonna* proper della Rocca), several Saint Rochus'es, a Crucifixion with the Madonna and Saint John at the foot of the cross ; Saint Sebastian, his drops of blood symmetrically arranged and decoratively placed; Saint Lucy, carrying her eyes neatly on a dish ; Saint Mary Magdalene, San Francesco ; the feet of a large Saint Christopher wading in water which is full of crabs and fish,—and many more saints, both men and women. Then we go from the church to the village, where we sit down on some stone steps, Ballin getting out his sketch-book and pencil and beginning to draw. Evening

draws near, we return to the monastery and the kitchen. The fire flames and crackles on the big hearth, Eugenio is busy beside it, a cloth is laid across one end of the large table, Padre Felice taking his place at the end, with Mogens and myself on his right against the wall. Eugenio waits upon us: gives us tomato soup, boiled meat, cheese and a large dish of green figs; we eat a great deal of bread and drink freely of the yellow wine, and after saying grace and making the sign of the cross, in which I venture to join, we go down to the spring outside the lower village gate. We carry a lantern as the August evening is dark. When it has been set down in the dust beside the spring Padre Felice, at the request of Mogens, tells us about his life. The water murmurs, the moon sets far out behind Perugia and the stars gleam. I recite poems by Goethe and begin to speak French without fear. The young girls come to the spring to fetch water, and Padre Felice gives them a word or two to take with them on their way home: "*Ricordatevi della vostra mamma*," asks them not to forget their Mother in heaven. We climb up again to the monastery; outside the closed door of the chapel Padre Felice and Mogens kneel down and say the litany to the Blessed Virgin while I remain standing, though silently joining in the prayer. When the two Catholics rise from their devotions Mogens beckons to me. "Look in through the key-hole," he whispers. I look, and see the sanctuary lamp burning within. "It keeps watch all night beside Jesus, while we have to sleep," he says. We go into the monastery, go up to the upper cloister where are the bedrooms, three in number, the largest and best being allotted to me. We bid each other a gay good-night, and at length I keep vigil alone in the white cloister, where I sit down on the low parapet with my back against one of the pillars and look up at the sky. It is quiet, only the grasshoppers are singing. Above the silent courtyard of the monastery gleam Charles's Wain and Arcturus, the star of my

childhood. I think of this day last year, of how unhappy I was then, and once more I give thanks.

Next morning the sun is shining and it is Sunday. Padre Felice says Mass; it is the fifth of August, the feast of Our Lady of the Snow; at our morning coffee he tells us the legend of the miraculous snow that fell one summer morning on the Esquiline hill and showed the pious Roman patrician where the Mother of God wished her chief church to be built—Santa Maria Maggiore. Before noon we are back again in Assisi.

It became a fixed rule now, however, that we were to accompany Padre Felice to La Rocca every Saturday. The Dutch father was pleased to have our company. "Monks and artists get on well together," he said. From the very outset we had wanted to go and live there, but there were difficulties about receiving two laymen—and one of them not even a Catholic—as guests in a monastery. Padre Felice had no objection, but had to obtain permission from his superiors. Mogens Ballin then offered to carry out some decorative work in the church and monastery—to restore the old Byzantine crucifix hanging above the chancel arch, to decorate the altar with appropriate symbols and emblems and to paint a fresco in the refectory, which Padre Felice intended to put into a state of repair, so that it would no longer be necessary to have meals in the kitchen. In return Mogens only asked for house-room for the two of us while the work was being done. This offer was accepted, and early in September we took up our abode in La Rocca.

Before this could be arranged we had to be content to live as monastic a life as we could in Assisi. As a preparation for the work at La Rocca Mogens copied in tempera colours the fresco by the five disciples (beneath Cimbabue's Madonna in the south transept) in the lower church of San Francesco, and then began to practise tempera painting. A piece of wall surface had been allowed him

in the upper cloister in the old churchyard beside San Francesco, the so-called " little Chiostro." There he now set to work with buckets of lime and pots of colour, and with brushes, at making his first attempts in the difficult art of painting on wet lime. To enable me to work near him a table and chair were brought out from the sacristy. There I sat, then, either reading, or translating Edgar Allan Poe, but without great interest. In this way we spent many a happy hour in the little chiostro. From within the church came the sound of the monks praying in choir ; in the noonday heat the flies buzzed about the large pink-flowering oleanders between the straight trunks of the cypresses. Now and then I stood up, took a turn in the cloisters, read the inscriptions on the tombstones in the floor—" *Hic requiescunt cadavera hominum fraternitatis Sancti Stephani* "—or the neat *grafitti* in the stucco of the walls, the names of pilgrims of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—*Io Niccolo Boccolini* 1730, *Io Antonio Dragovich*—(where were they now, those who had said " I " about themselves a hundred and fifty years ago—where was that " Io " now ?). Everywhere in the walks stood old, broken tombstones, capitals, fragments of columns, you walked across graves, birds darted noiselessly in and out of the dark cypresses, through an iron-grated opening you looked down into the pale, wild valley of the Tescio, which is said by those who have been to Jerusalem to be exactly like the valley of Jehosaphat—the valley of the Day of Judgment. Here one was really far away from the modern world, here one might, as Valdemar Vedel[1] had written in an article about *The Tower* and its programme—" strive at re-awakening mediæval feelings."

In the evening when the work was done and supper was finished we went, as at La Rocca, to the well. Our well was Fonte Marcella, in the street below Filomena's house ; we reached it by all kinds of wonderful back

[1]One of the best Danish critics of the present day.

streets—streets that were over-arched and streets in stairs ; we sat down on the low wall opposite the spring and fell into talk with the women and girls who came to fetch water, with children at play, and with their mothers who alternately scolded and spoiled them. Mogens already spoke Italian well, and I did my best to follow his example.

But after the hour of gossip came the hour for talk between us, and after our talk came the hour for self-communing. Again and again, in discussions, debates and disputes with Mogens and myself I pondered the ever returning question, still unsolved : " Could—dared —ought I to become a Catholic ?"

## V

And it was constantly from feelings that resistance came. Valdemar Vedel had been right in stating the aim of the new movement to be " the planting of mediæval feelings in the younger generation." He who possesses all the thoughts of a man, his theoretical convictions, but who has not yet won his feelings, has not conquered. Feeling is the inner fortress of the soul, the " *beffroi* " of the life of consciousness, the " keep " in which the guard shuts itself in and does not surrender, and from which it sounds the alarm at a favourable moment, and the enemy is driven from the outworks, from the ramparts of philosophy and the *glacis* of theory.

Here the reading of Bloy was useful. He did not prove ; he testified on the basis of his heart's conviction. It struck into me when I read these words (in an article on Huysmans' *Là-bas*) : " With the balsam of truth, the drink of life, the highest hope, he has brewed himself a deadly poison, that his tomb-soul might not be in danger of rejoicing." In the same article, about the same book and the same author : " Always to be sad is a sign of

turpitude." Did I not know it well, this ineradicable sadness in the depths of the soul? Was not I too *une âme de sépulcre*, who would not for the world surrender to joy? What else did it mean, that heaviness of spirit which came over me so often on lonely evenings, and which I did not drive away with prayers and the sign of the cross, but to which I opened the door and gave welcome—*come, be happy, sit near me, shadow-vested misery?* Here was I, living day after day, week after week, between two good-hearted men who only wished me well—who did not force themselves upon me to convert me, but whose faces were radiant with joy, and in whose hearts I felt that peace reigned. And I *would* not be happy, *would* not have peace. Instead of meekly and devoutly blessing myself with the consecrated water before a just and healthy sleep, I wandered about romantically in the moonlight; when everyone was asleep, I would sit up till a late hour on the parapet of a wall and gaze up at the stars—those stars which I thought Ballin and Padre Felice did not love as much as I. Or, on a rainy day I would shut up all my books, leave all my work and go out to the Pincio, a small wood outside Porta Cappucini, would sit down there in a grotto of dark foliage and gaze out in the rain and wind. In front of me there was a lawn of yellow grass, already withered, round about it stood rustling trees at which the wind was tearing; above the whole was a grey and lowering sky. Everything looked so northern, so natural, all thoughts of the supernatural vanished, and with a bitter sense of pleasure I felt that I was back in my old mournful world—*einsam und ohne Gott. . .*

Francis of Assisi did not err in calling despondency "the Babylonian disease"; no other mood of the soul leads like that back to Babylon, to the world one has left, and to Sodom burning behind one. A Danish historian thought he had dealt Christianity a mortal wound when, with a great deal of learning, he had proved in a big book

that all religion—the Christian one included—was only a further development of the experience of primitive man, of the great fundamental motive of existence—the opposition between *light and darkness*. "No mystery at all, gentlemen, it is all quite simple!" Even if the "quite simple" is a slight exaggeration, a Christian can well accept Troels Lund's theory. The learned historian is right—existence *is* a dualism, long maintained and not yet decided, between two worlds: the worlds of light and darkness. From the ancient Persians to the modern Christian poet, from Zoroaster to Ingemann, it has been known that the exterior world is a symbol of the interior, and that souls characterise themselves and judge themselves by their psychical affinity to light or darkness. There was in myself, as there is in everyone, both a longing for light and a bent towards darkness, but most of all the latter. During the three months I spent at Assisi and La Rocca with Mogens Ballin (August, September, October) an unremitting warfare was being carried on within me—like that which was carried on some years ago between two well-fortified and not easily movable fronts—a three months' battle, like that of Verdun, between the straining after happiness, light and Paradise, still new and feeble and badly equipped against arguments, and the old, heavy need of doing what was easiest—giving way, going under.

First and above all the old self in me made an extensive use of "scandalisation." Nowhere is it more clearly seen than in the taking of scandal that we are all, as Hamlet says, "arrant knaves." Necessity is the mother of invention, and the danger of arriving at a knowledge of the truth teaches man to be scandalised. The naturalistic Adam in me was anxious to escape becoming a Catholic, consequently I was scandalised. It was the fault of the Catholic Church when the children out at La Rocca coughed and had sores on their heads. It was the fault of the Catholic Church when Sora Nannina, one of our

evening acquaintances of Fonte Marcella, at one moment smothered her two lovely youngsters, Tuto and Rondano with kisses, and at another thrashed them, with the result that they were badly behaved little rascals. It was the fault of the Catholic Church—well, what was *not* the fault of the Catholic Church? "The persecution of so many heretics, of Giordano Bruno and Galileo, of the Albigenses and Hussites, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War, the Night of Saint Bartholomew." Was it possible to submit oneself to an institution which had things of this kind and much else on its conscience? "To suffer evil for God's sake is the core of Christianity," says a note in the diary on August 22nd. "It is following God's example, it is helping God. But is not everyone, then, who sacrifices himself and suffers for an ideal a co-worker with God? In other words, are not Galileo, Bruno and the victims of the Inquisition *the friends of God?*"

An evening or two later there are these lines: "Between ten and eleven p.m. I went out, sat for about an hour on a wall and gazed up at the stars. I thought of one of the fathers at San Francesco who had to-day, according to what Ballin had told me, copied out one of Ballin's prescriptions and imitated the signature. When we placed the matter before Father Felice he said he did not see any harm in it (! !). I thought of Ballin, who does not like my calling every aspiration after an ideal religious; evidently one must not have *too* much religiosity in the world! I thought of altruism, of God who lives in human souls and through them acts upon the world. I thought of Goethe's stern self-control and of the continual forgiveness of sins by Catholicism at confession. I thought of Schopenhauer, who teaches conversion from the will to life by means of self-forgetfulness and self-denial. I thought of Tolstoi's Christianity, which is 'meek and humble of heart.' I thought of Carlyle's Pantheism, his mystic sense of infinity. I was scared by the humane mediocrity at home. But are Catholics less

mediocre? I thought of the stupidity of my not enjoying Italy more, and of Ballin spending his youth away from the world and his fellow-men, without any joy in what is beautiful, without any contemplation of Nature. I thought of the difficulty of realising the dictates of conscience without the support of faith, and had an uneasy suspicion of the possibility of an opposition between *happiness and truth*. I felt a dread that I might have offended truth, and considered how unthinkingly I had adopted supernaturalism, attacked atheism. I thought of Shelley, of Multatuli, of all the heroes of humanism—and my thoughts floated out on an infinite ocean of unrest—and the flesh lifted up its voice, which Christ alone can quell: 'Oh, Lord, have mercy upon me, thou who livest in my soul, and for whom I would fain make a temple of my heart!' I am in dread that I may have offended truth—for 'truth is so noble' (says Master Eckhardt) 'that if God were to turn away from truth, I would cling to truth and let God go.' And I felt within me an infinite awe, a boundless worship of the God of truth!"

I have quoted the whole of this passage because it describes so exhaustively a soul that is biassed in being scandalised and in clinging to its supposed spiritual wealth. First comes the virtuous indignation over a priest who does such a shocking thing as copying a prescription and over another priest who approves of it. That I have done worse things in my life is forgotten; I hold my head high and write exclamation points to emphasise my scandalised feelings. Then I am sarcastic to Ballin, who in a discussion wanted to distinguish between human idealism and actual religious feeling, as between two essentially different ideas. After that I console myself with all the good to be found in the world outside the Church, and reflect that free-thought has also its adherents. I open my literary treasure chest, from Schopenhauer to Carlyle—"all the heroes of

humanism"—without considering whether I had myself been a hero or not in my own humanistic age, which would seem to be really the only thing that mattered! Finally I hide myself behind the opposition established by Taine, Renan and others, between dogma, which is an untruth but confers happiness and moral conduct, and science, which gives one the truth, but a truth that is sad and deprives one of support.

Setting out from a train of thought of this kind I wrote, in September, the cycle of sonnets entitled *Chaldea*, the spirit of which can be perceived in these verses.

> Heaven attracts and earth entices;
> The truth calls and the heart weeps—
> A voice arises from the deeps,
> Full soon they cease, those bells of God.
>
> There is a rust of blood on the columns of heaven
> And stains of sinful pleasure on the garments of truth.
> Must the heart be bound and thought be fettered
> Ere the soul shall taste of the wine of God?

Christianity, the Church, is here seen as the cruel, intolerant, tyrannical power—but it stiffens the spine. Free-thinking is the well of truth, but it produces moral laxity. And as I wanted neither to side with the tyrants nor to fall into the cesspool of vice, I continued, in a way that was incomprehensible to Ballin, to Padre Felice, Verkade and other interested friends, to hover between the two magnets, approaching or receding from, now one, now the other of the two poles.

After this introduction I append a series of extracts from my diary.

## VI

" Aug. 9th. We must picture the fallen world to ourselves as a border country between two opposed worlds —that of Being and that of Nothingness, the one ' above,' the other ' beneath ' us. We are free to choose whether we will ascend or descend. We rise by conforming ourselves to God ; we sink by conforming ourselves to the devil.

"The dwelling of the devil is in the 'abyss,' that is, in the deeps of Nature. When the whole of Nature has been redeemed there is no longer any dwelling-place for the devil, who returns to nothingness. The devil has dragged us with him in his fall in order to have a dwelling-place. Without us he could not live, because he has been cast out by God, who alone lives of Himself. We lend him life of our life and we can cause him to die by taking back the life we have lent him.

" A stronger and stronger feeling that I and these mountains and the olive trees of this vast plain and the murmuring water in the spring exist in a *marvellous* manner—exist through the power of God.

" Aug. 10. La Rocca. Evening at the well. Padre Felice tells us about a demon which had entered into a clock in Holland and was exorcised. It sang ribald songs, laughed and spoke out of the clock and swung it round. Asserted that in heaven it had been called Stella Maris. Appeared to the priest and eighteen other persons in the form of a beautiful young man and then vanished.—Over the dark plains and the distant mountains the golden-red half-moon was setting—the moon which I saw a year ago at Svendborg.—Talked with the peasants about the stars. I reflected that even if the men of the Church had done wrong in persecuting those who championed the cause of intellectual truth, one had to forgive them because the Church has always possessed and does possess moral truth.—Night on the loggia. The country

dark close at hand, further away the mountains in a greyish haze. Grasshoppers and frogs singing, and '*dost thou not hear the Aziola cry?*' I hear its constantly repeated, softly melancholy call: '*chiù, chiù.*' Far away a clock strikes the third quarter to eleven—over towards Assisi, it must be Sterpeto. And San Lorenzo weeps its golden tears.

"Aug. 11. Infinity—this mystery above all mysteries. In the morning after Mass. The sun lights up white Perugia far away under a grey sky, and bells are ringing from distant mountain villages.

"Saint Hieronymus died trembling with fear, Padre Felice tells us. And I am greatly distressed at the poverty of the people here, at their diseases and their ignorance. The church is full of coughing people and the town is full of children suffering from lupus. *Is* it the will of God that mankind should be ill and miserable? Or is it not I who am a criminal against humanity, with my sympathy for the Church which is hostile to Science?—I am writing this away among the mountains, alone, while Ballin is sketching in the village. A cicada is singing behind me. The stony path winds under oaks, between olive fields. In front of me there is a slope down towards the broad olive-grown country sinking into valleys and undulating between the hills, bright in the sun and shadowed by the clouds; furthest away the dome of Monte Tezio rises up, mauve and with patches of green woods against the clouded sky on the horizon. I think of Shelley and again I dream of a pure humanism, an ethical Pantheism. And Shelley loved—as I do—the poetry of the Psalms of David and of the Gospels. Ah! poetry, deliver us!

"Our Father, the prayer of the open sky, not the litanies of the closed churches.

"The whole system of amulets, the nuisance of miracles, the revelations of Jesus to nuns, the apparition of the Madonna at Lourdes, at Rapallo, etc., appal me.

It is as though God were smaller than we human beings wish Him to be! Perhaps He is not, as we believe, truth, beauty and love, but a maker of miracles and a fetish-god?

"And yet—it is beautiful that He is humble, that He is not too great to restore a poor sick woman to health, to reveal Himself to an ignorant peasant, to lend His power to medals and scapulars, to make use of heathen traditions. Nay, God is so humble that He approaches man in the simplest form. (These thoughts arose in me during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the church, while I trembled at the silence and the violent ringing of the bells.)

"Evening in the village with Ballin and Padre Felice. On the high stair outside *il Piovano's* house. Padre Felice sat among the people, and they all told him their troubles; he sat there as the actual representative of Christ. A little old woman continually kissed the hem of his cassock, the knots of the rope about his waist. She had recently lost her granddaughter and wept incessantly. Padre Felice comforted her: 'We must say what we have said so often in the church, Thy will be done, oh Lord.' Later on at the well. Moonlight. Padre Felice talked about Louise Lateau, the Belgian girl with the stigmata; the Host flew from his hand into her mouth.—Before we went to bed great merriment over lamps that went out and keys that we could not find—at last a long, intimate talk, all three of us sitting on Padre Felice's hard bed.

"Aug. 12. The feast of Saint Clare. God is love, truth, beauty. Every effort directed towards these three is Christian. And Christianity is the worshipping and following of this God.

"San Damiano. The monastery courtyard, white and quiet. The monastery garden, the pergolas, cypresses, a small, sombre grove. Sat afterwards with Ballin underneath the olive trees outside the monastery. Ballin talked about the saints and said that their renunciation of beauty

should be understood as a penance which they imposed upon themselves, for God is the Lord of all beauty. In front of us a brown field with the gnarled trunks and grey-green foliage of the olive trees. The mountains in the west violet in the golden light of the setting sun; mauve mountain ridges in the east.

" Aug. 13. The thought of the fathers and doctors of the Church, that Christ is Reason (Logos), which reveals itself in the souls of men to guide them in the right path, and which, when they will not obey reason, reveals itself at last in human form to save us by its life and death. ('*Lumen rationis quo in nobis loquitur Deus*,' says Saint Thomas. Landriot: *Le Christ de la Tradition*, Vol. I, pp. 47-48.)

" God descends to the world in the Word; he ascends again from the world in love. (Parallel: rain and evaporation.)

" I still feel uncertain with regard to Christianity. I do not feel here, as in Pantheism, the full, assured certainty: *dass du schauest, nicht schwärmst, die liebliche, volle Gewissheit.*[1] [2]

" Aug. 14. The philosophy of evolution teaches us that the good is that which conduces to the progress of life, and that it has arisen through adaptation to reality, formed by its conditions and demands. Yes, for God is reality and the good is to obey Him—' to obey *life*, as a law must be obeyed.'

" Poetry opened my heart to beauty; my marriage, my son, opened my heart to love; God Himself opened my heart to prayer. My poor, shrivelled heart, which was barely able to beat, still less to pray. For outside God, away from God, all hearts must die.

" To deny God means to deny reality, order, life. To

[1] Here I confuse the *easy* thought with the *true* one. But it is a common superstition that the easiest thought is also the right one. What certainty have we, in a philosophical sense, about Pantheism?

[2] What thou beholdest, not (what thou) dreamest, the lovable, full, certainty

say ' Man has created God ' (instead of the truth : ' Man has recognised God ') must lead on to saying that man has created reality (which Fichte has in fact said).

" God is *latent* in all things. He is *actual* in the sacraments.

" God revealed Himself in reason, but He was not obeyed. He therefore reveals Himself now in that which is against reason.

" Evening outside the town. The long shadow-line of mountains and the town with its towers, gates and trees against an atmosphere that is greenish up above, golden-red further down. Behind the silhouette of the town the distant bluish mountains and the black country, over which hundreds of lights are being lit far and near like stars, while all the bells are ringing in honour of the Assumption.

" Aug. 16. We are made in the image of God ; that is, our anger means that God can be angered, our love that God can love.

" Aug. 17. *Alles worin der Mensch Ruhe sucht, das nicht lauter Gott ist, das ist alles wurmstichig.* These words of Tauler seem to me in my inmost heart to be presumptuous and ungrateful. There are many things in which there is something of God, a little of God. Have we a right to reject them ? I think of the love of home, of parents, wife, children, etc.

" I sit on the mountain side by the old castle and look down over the valley of the Tescio. The mountains seem wonderful to me, with their grey zigzag paths, their green patches of grass or copse, their golden brown or blood red quarries, their bare grey or violet heights, over which cloud shadows are passing. Theoretically, Pantheism continues to fascinate me, to draw me away from the fantastic world of miracles and visions. Practically, I am a Christian, and fear, nay loathe, the moral conclusions of Pantheism, as revealed by the life of modern humanity. I fear that without Christianity I shall fall back

again; indeed, I know it. Oh, God, thou who art Truth, help me!

"Aug. 18. In the night the following became clear to me.

"I must break off with myself. I must overcome what I have against Christianity. I must believe—*quand même, malgré tout*. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice.' Scientific moral theories do not lead to it; they have no power.

"It is my duty to become a professing Christian. Love requires that I should do so. I ought to be a Christian, out of love for others, in order to do my duty to others.

"'*On se précipite au Rien de la pensée pour échapper à la contamination du libertinage et de l'incrédulité.*' Are these words of Bloy said of me?

"And suppose they are. It is a misery to me, not a comfort, to throw myself into modern ecclesiasticism—a misery which I suffer for God's sake, in order that God may rule and be active in me. He who lives and works in the Church which has been the Church of the Apostles and Martyrs, of the Fathers and the Saints.

"10 p.m. Moonlight. The pale, fluted, long roof on the opposite side of the dark street. Away beyond the roof the grey, moon-bright country, from which ascend laughter and singing, and where a solitary candle is lit far down near Santa Maria degli Angeli. Furthest away rise the shadow lines of the mountains above a belt of whitish haze.

"How I would have yearned in bygone days towards this country, this life! Now I stay calmly in my cell. That yearning towards life, ever unsatisfied, was yearning towards God, a deluded yearning towards God.

"Aug. 19. Poetry is God's instrument for awakening the great longings—for life, light, joy—the longings that God alone can satisfy. *Le désir de la Face de Dieu* (Hello).

"'God demands this sacrifice of us,' it is often said.

It is because He needs it. God's *need*. God as one who is poor (Bloy).

" That which we love in sin is the beauty of the feeling that we waste upon it.

" It was the will of God that the Crusades should come to pass. And perhaps He made use of them, and of the Inquisition, as instruments for punishing the Church. God allowed His Church to become guilty in the carnage of the Crusades and in the burning of heretics. But can the Church then be said to have been infallible? And did God inspire her to evil?

" Evening. Padre Felice beautiful as an archangel. We all three go down to the churchyard, where a service has been held to-day for the dead. It was late, the gate was closed. From the chapel a last clanging bell rang out into the darkness. On all the graves small lamps were burning; in the flickering light the blades of grass quivered like pale skeleton hands.

" A talk with Ballin afterwards about the Church and the Bible. He maintains that one must wholly and entirely understand Scripture as interpreted by the Church. Above all, one must 'obey Peter.' When the Pope declares Crusades to be just, then they are just. One must wholly and entirely believe in the Church as one believes in Christ Himself. What she teaches is true, what she ordains is law, what she permits is right. The Church is the voice of God.

" The standpoint is logical, and I understand now that a complete *surrender* is demanded, not only of one's reason, but also of one's *conscience*. I also understand that one can thus attain to absolute rest. But, oh God, oh God, dost thou demand it of me? Is the Church the organ of Thy will? Is it true that through her Thou revealest the holy, infallible way to right and good conduct? Alas! where, where is the point of growth for the full, true development of life? the real human life, worthy of man?—It is by a smoothing out of the Gospel,

an ignoring of certain words of Jesus (" Put up again thy sword into its place, for all that take the sword shall perish by the sword "); it is by a neutralising of the opposing elements that the Church reaches the *unity* of its moral system. This might indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit, this might be the Holy Spirit's work, the continuation of Christ's . . ."

" Aug. 20. It is true that the Apostles *explained* the Gospel, did not give it to men to read. They interpreted it by the Holy Spirit."

" Aug. 21. You cannot realise the Word of God in yourself except by the spirit of God. And you have not the spirit of God except in the community of God, which is the Church. The light within us can be darkened by sin, and only by the descent of the spirit over the Logos within us does the *Word* become the *Saviour*. I want to understand everything from outside before I enter within. It is with this as it is with poetry, one must surrender. '*Gedichte sind gemalte Fensterscheiben.*'[1] So, too, with dogma, it must be seen *from within.*

" The origin of the sacrificial idea in the family meal shared in common, in which *the father* was always given the best place, and the love and submission of the others was expressed in their renunciation. God has intended this natural sacrificial idea to be a preparation for Christianity."

Aug. 22. Letter to Verkade at Beuron.

My dear Verkade,

I come to you with some questions concerning several things which stand as obstacles between myself and the Church. I hope you will be able to solve them in a satisfactory way for me ; there is nothing I desire more.

Jesus Christ said to Peter, " Put up thy sword again into its place, for all that take the sword shall perish

[1]Poems are stained glass windows.

by the sword." In the Sermon on the Mount He forbade His disciples to resist evil. Moreover, the fifth commandment still holds good.

Now I ask myself, how can the Church of Jesus Christ preach war against the Turks (as in the time of the Crusades) or against the Moors (in Spain, in the time of the Inquisition)? And has not the Church—horrible thought!—*burnt human beings* (Giordano Bruno, Vanini and other Pantheistic thinkers or heretical Christians—such as, for instance, the Albigenses). I tremble when I think of these things. A man like Torquemada seems to me the greatest blasphemer of *the God of justice.*

I have placed these difficulties before Ballin, but he has only answered me that the Pope has a right to preach war against infidels, and that it was the will of Jesus Christ that infidels should be burnt or slain in other ways. But God cannot contradict Himself. He cannot say to Moses: "Thou shalt do no murder!" and to the Pope: "Thou mayest freely commit murder!" Jesus, who is "meek and humble of heart," cannot will that war should be waged against those who are so unhappy as not to believe in Him. It would be doubling their sufferings, which are already great enough, since they are deprived of God. It is already enough that grace is not for all (Romans ix, 18-21).

There is still a point, of less importance, about which I should like to have your opinion. In Münscher's *Dogmengeschichte* I read about the great theological strife in the Church in the fourteenth century. One side maintained that the redeemed souls attained to the beatific vision immediately after death, while the other insisted that this did not happen till the Last Day. The strife was carried to Pope John XXII, who declared the *latter* of the two views to be the true one. But the supporters of the *first* mentioned view were

not satisfied, and after the death of John XXII they placed the matter before his successor, Benedict XII —who now said that *they* were right! Thus both doctrines were declared to be true by the infallible Pope! I confess, my dear friend, that this bewilders me.

Excuse my worrying you with my questions, but I am eagerly and anxiously seeking the truth, and *I do not want to find anything but the truth*. Help me and pray for me to the God of light.[1]

"Aug. 23. A change of ministry in Denmark. The

[1]As I wrote this letter myself, I run no risk of an action for libel by characterising it as thoroughly dishonest and deliberately cunning. Its dishonesty and cunning are all the more dangerous because they are unconscious—being dictated by the will not to find the truth, acting in the depths of the soul, and by the hope of finding a way of evading it, of passing it by out to the pleasure woods of liberty where one may venture to eat of the fruits of all the trees in the garden. In order to achieve this object I deceive myself and make a pretext of historical difficulties which at the most existed but vaguely in my mind and were connected with a protest of my feelings. For what did I know about such intricate questions as the Inquisition or the Albigenses—beyond what I had read in a text-book of European history at school? But on such flimsy grounds as these I thought I could not become a Catholic.

My Scripture texts are not of much better quality. They are employed polemically, not in earnest. When had *I* turned the other cheek to receive the second blow? When had *I* shown myself "meek and humble of heart"? He who does not himself practise the Sermon on the Mount has no right to attack others with it. If Christians do not obey the commandments of Christ that is a matter between them and their Lord, an outsider has no right to criticise them.

There is false compassion and insincerity in the cant about those who are "so unhappy" as not to believe in "Him" (with a pious-seeming capital H). My real intention is to say that the doctrine about elective grace seems to me to be unjust.

Finally, I try to entrap the convert who was, after all, an artist by profession, and only incidentally a theologian, in a disputed question of Church history, about which I was even misinformed, as Benedict XII had proclaimed the very doctrine which I attributed to John XXII, and which no Council, no Pope, has ever altered. (See Denziger-Bannwart's *Enchiridion*, No. 530.) The lack of good will and the consequent lack of good faith are glaring. If I had read to the end of the chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which I quoted to Verkade, I would have found this: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and a rock of scandal: and whosoever believeth in him shall not be confounded." But I continued to stumble against the rock of scandal.

close of a period—the Radicals disappear. Edvard Brandes goes to Christiania. Feel the desire to take a hand in affairs, against which Ballin gives it as his conviction: 'We have to labour at perfecting ourselves. If God wills that we are to work for others, He will make it known to us in such a way that we cannot be mistaken.' No, He lets us know in our hearts and not by exterior miracles!

"I will not dethrone my conscience. I should never be able to take part in putting a human being to death because of his opinions. Think, for instance, of burning Georg Brandes? No—*die Wenigen, die was davon erkannt, hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.*

"Those who seek the true, the beautiful, the good, have died for the world with Christ and Christ has died for them. In their following of Christ they have forgiveness of sins, in so far as the ideal is ever present to them, and a constant contrition blots out every transgression, every swerving from their seeking after God. They *have* God, they *have* everlasting life, they belong to the host of which Christ is the firstborn![1]

"Aug. 24. Is Christianity, which teaches us the difference between good and evil, the tree of knowledge? And Pantheism the tree of life? But then Christianity becomes the forbidden fruit? Certain it is, that when one has tasted of it one is driven out of 'the happy guiltlessness' of Eden!

"Did the devil lie when he declared himself able to give Christ all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? Christ says in Gethsemane: 'The prince of this world is already judged.' Does He by this mean *Himself*—for it was on *Him* that judgment was passed; it was He who was thrust out from the holy city. . .

"Mary, the symbol of humanity, of the earth, of Nature which brings forth grace.

"It is true that in self-defence we may transgress the

[1] This is about the same as the Christianity for "seekers after God," now preached in North Germany.

third commandment (to defend our souls) and the fifth (to defend our bodies). But it does not follow from this that the Church can take the offensive. It has also been proved that it has not been successful. Jerusalem was re-conquered by the Turks, and Pantheism was not burnt to death at Campo dei Fiori.

" Aug. 25. La Rocca. Talk with Ballin, who continues to assert that war is allowable when the Pope commands it, and as an argument brings in Jehovah, who rebuked the Jews because they had not slain Canaanites enough. What a Moloch is not that God which he preaches ! That God will never make wars to cease in the world—as the true God is one day to do !

" At the supper table stories about the state of morals in Assisi. Two men, two brothers, for instance, live with one wife ! The morality of the married women often leaves much to be desired, often, immediately after marriage, they become downright harlots. Other things are even worse. And such things happen in a Catholic country ! At the spring Mogens spoke against the sentimentalism which took the form of admiring the stars, and declared ' ingratitude to God ' to be ' the worst vice of humanity.' He prayed a great deal before the church door when we came back. I stood contemplating the infinity of the stars and the distant lights in Perugia, while I trembled under the burden of the infinity of life and was filled with dread of the great riddle : to unite the true with the good, to make life great and beautiful on a foundation of truth.

" Aug. 26. A hurried Mass, while the morning sun shone over the land and distant Perugia gleamed bright. At breakfast Ballin praised Saint Louis, who had had the tongues of blasphemers torn out (!). In the village Coralinda's radiant eyes and smile ; there is dancing to the music of a plaintive violin and a merry double bass.

" In a number of the *Review of Reviews* which has been sent to me I find an article by Stead, which has given me

food for much thought. I saw the eternal Gospel, the eternally active core in all religions and Churches. I saw Christ and nothing but Him. I understood the words, 'Blessed are they, who hear my words and do them.' In this one commandment the whole of Christ's claim is included.

"Plan for a book: the Saviour—a book about my *Journey in search of Christ*, dedicated to wayfarers and seekers. I see a great cause, a great task before me—to preach the Christianity of Christ—a Christianity which is true compassion, not thoughtless almsgiving—a Christianity which is the realising of the ideal in life, in history—to lead the cause of the revealed, suffering God to victory. A Christian faith in the suffering, but ultimately victorious, God, and this faith as a condition for obtaining everlasting life.

"In the afternoon procession outside San Francesco. Banners, red and yellow parasol, monks with candles, altar boys with bells, clouds of incense about the *baldacchino*, under which Father Custodian, in a white cope, carries the Monstrance. Inside the church five rows of burning candles, the continual rise and fall of the liturgy, the clouds of incense, all in honour of *the suffering* God.

"(Evening prayer). Lord, he who seeks Thee, he who seeks the good and the true, cannot go astray. He who seeks nothing but Thee must find Thee at last! He who earnestly wishes to seek and to say nothing but the truth, to love and work the good, must come to God. And love for the beautiful is the school in which we learn to forget ourselves and to love the *symbolic* revelation of eternal truth—for the revelation of its *essence* is the good reigning in the soul as reason and conscience, and historical in the person of Christ.

"Aug. 27. The life and death of Christ are the revelation of this word: 'God suffers. Suffer with God!' Christ died on the cross that He might reveal to us this

truth, which is the truth leading to salvation, the truth to life, the truth that makes us free.

"I find the essence of Christianity expressed in these words of Claussen in an article in *The Tower*; 'holy as one who is sacrificed to eternal powers.' For to sacrifice oneself to the eternal, that it is to be a Christian.

"Aug. 28. At the table Ballin explained his idea of *order* as the one thing needful for salvation. One ought to work, not for the sake of the result, but for the work's own sake. And this work ought to be regular and methodical, not spasmodic and artistic. He referred to some words of the painter, Filiger: '*L'œuvre c'est la vraie pénitence—l'œuvre qui n'est pas faite dans la jouissance d'un moment, mais pour laquelle on a vraiment peiné.*' To work was the best way of doing penance, not for pleasure and as long as one liked, but perseveringly and against one's inclination!

"The talk turned to other subjects, amongst them to the infallibility of the Pope. The Pope, Ballin asserted, is not infallible, except when he speaks *ex cathedra* on religious and moral questions. And then, suddenly, I do not know how, I gave vent to my ill will and reproached him with my not daring to kneel any more in the church, because of that morning in Perugia when he had forbidden me to take the holy water. . . And it turned out that *he had wanted to hand it to me.*

"We wept together. We prayed together."

## VII

"The *Enemy* has done this," said Mogens, when we had arrived at an understanding that evening. "The Evil One saw that you came here with a good will, and he took advantage of your suspicion, your want of confidence in yourself and others, to keep you away from the Church. You came to go into the house of God and at the very door he deluded you into thinking that you were

not welcome, that you were not worthy! *Who* is worthy? Am I worthy? Is Padre Felice worthy? But that is the continual trickery practised by the devil on modest people—he inspires them with false humility."

It was on the evening of the feast of Saint Augustine, the eve of the *second* feast of my patron saint, the commemoration of his beheading, that Mogens and I had this intimate talk, and that we prayed together for the first time. The next morning I rose at half-past six and went with my friend to Mass at the convent of the Germans nuns in the Via Santa Croce. Solemnly, significantly and deeply touched, with a beautiful smile he handed me the holy water at the entrance, and with deep joy I received it, in great happiness I knelt side by side with him, close to the altar, and in the cool and exalted peace of the clean, white church I felt that blissful melting of the heart, of which Bloy speaks somewhere—" as when ice melts in the hands of the heavenly Father."

The diary says: " A radiantly bright morning. Purity of the church. Deep shame at my sinfulness, a deep dread of sin. And a strong feeling of the aridity of my heart hitherto. Self-righteousness, want of true awe of God. A feeling of shame at the meanness and commonness of my heart, compared with the heart of a Christian.

" Talk with Padre Felice, who congratulated me on the awakening that had occurred. ' You Protestants do not believe in the supernatural; you will have to get used to that!'—The Pope is not infallible except in matters of faith. War is of God when it is just (and every natural person knows this, for he considers it justifiable to fight for his country. If I have resisted hitherto, it has been rather that I might have a weapon against the Church than because of love of humanity). " God resists the proud," are his last words—' *Deus superbus resistit.*' And I feel how *superbus* I have been with all my objections and all my false humanism, all my instrumental indignation."

At dinner that day, which Ballin and the good Filomena had made as festive as they could in honour of the commemoration, we talked more intimately than ever before. " One has no right to make conditions for one's redemption," said Mogens. " We must accept the conditions made by God. It is true that we all have the interior light. But this light is darkened by mortal sin, and can then not guide us.

The day passed calmly and happily in work in the little Chiostro, in a walk with Padre Felice in the wood belonging to the Sagro Convento. Our priest friend had brought some work with him on the walk, some brass wire and a pair of small pincers, with which he turned the wire into a chain as he walked. "*Padre Felice e un buon Padre*," he said jokingly, with an imitation of a childish tone—" *sta lavorando una catena per la lampada del Santissimo.*"[1] He asserted positively that there were foxes, snakes and wild cats in the little wood, which we did not consider quite credible. Then he told us about the relics of the convent, amongst which he mentioned the skin of Saint Bartholomew. We would not believe this either, but left the matter with a joking protest. No demon of doubt, no witch of scandalisation dared approach that day to delude the sight and lead the will astray. In my diary I wrote down these words of Tauler : " *Dass die klaren göttlichen Augen uns so gründlich ansehen and durchsehen bis in unsern Grund, und dass der Mensch so recht unlauter dagegen steht, der also ungeläutert ist, darum weil er nicht in der Wahrheit ist.*" Thus had I felt that morning in the white church—that I was so unclean before the divine eyes which looked through me right to the bottom of my soul, *because I was not in the truth.*" And my evening prayer was : " Lord, I am powerless to help myself. My reason and my conscience are nought. Lord, I shall be the prey of evil unless Thou come to my aid !"

[1] " Padre Felice is a good father, he is making a chain for the sanctuary lamp."

This was the prayer of the publican, this was *telling the truth* at last, this was the *Non sum*, the "I am nought," without which no one can enter the kingdom of heaven. It had come, that saving moment, in which the wheels of existence stand still, and when the soul can escape from "the everlasting return"[1] into the rapturous present of eternity. The morning after this day of awakening, the morning of August 30th, I should simply have knocked at the door of the Church, and to him who opened it and asked me, "*Quid petis?*"—"What seekest thou?"—I should have given the neophyte's answer, "*Fidem*"—"The Faith." For, as the dialogue proceeds at the baptismal font, "What does faith bestow upon thee?" "*Fides quid tibi præstat?*" "Eternal life" "*Vitam eternam.*"

This is the old simple way of becoming a Christian. In this way the Vikings became Catholics—*they took hold of the Faith* (as you take hold of a slate that is handed to you). Take hold of the Faith, keep the Faith, be steadfast in the Faith, die in the Faith, obtain the reward of faith; there was not more, there is not more this very day; a peasant and a child can understand it.

My two friends in Assisi probably thought that I had also understood it. Discreet as both of them were, they did not allow any signs of expectation to appear. In essentials they regarded me as won, and with good reason. I might perhaps still have one or two difficulties, historical or philosophical, but they thought these could be overcome. It so happened that at this time an old and learned theologian was staying in Assisi, Professor Pennacchi of the Catholic University in Rome. I had been introduced to him during an evening walk; I was now asked to pay him a visit. To him I could speak of the doubts I might still have, and from him I could obtain answers to all my questions.

Professor Pennacchi lived with a family not far from

[1] ("*die ewige Wiederkunft*")

the nuns' convent of Sant' Andrea, where he officiated during his stay in Assisi as priest and confessor. When I went to see him a couple of big young women were generally sitting on the stairs, sewing or turning their wool-winders. One had to go through a passage and a dining-room to the professor's simply furnished study, where he sat behind a small writing-table with a biretta on his head, and smiling as kindly as his Baudelaire face would allow him to. The room was in semi-darkness, as it was lighted only by a single small window, and the air was close, as Pennacchi had an old Italian's dread of open windows. I was obliged to keep my hat on my head—and being old-Italian in this also, Pennacchi could not understand that it was for any reason but that of courtesy that I took off my hat, and insisted with many a *Tenga in capo* ! that I should keep it on. Then, leaning back in his chair, and now and then taking a pinch of snuff, the old professor listened to what I had to put before him in the way of doubts and objections.

I had a whole paper full of them. Why not have matters made clear when there was an opportunity ? There were historical questions about the Inquisition, the condemnation of Galileo, contradictory decisions by the Popes. " Was Peter really bishop of Rome ?" There were exegetical difficulties—the two accounts of the Ascension (according to one of which the Ascension took place in Galilee, according to the other on a mountain near Jerusalem ) ; the interpretation of the words, " This generation shall not pass away until all these things be done " ; the justification for construing the command of Jesus to the leper, " Go and show thyself to the priests," as applying to confession. There were philosophical problems—has evil been created or has it existed from all eternity, has it come into existence out of nothing or from God ?

Pennacchi listened patiently to my bad Italian, and then took up his task. He talked, he looked up the Vulgate

(but of course I immediately asked myself whether the Vulgate was as good a Bible as the Lutheran one), he explained, developed, proved, to the best of his ability. On the first day we discussed, for two hours and a half, " the Inquisition, the Crusades, the burning of heretics " (says the diary). " It is clear," I wrote afterwards, " that if there is an infallible Church, it is the duty of kings to defend it. It is the greatest crime to attack its doctrines, and whoever does this deserves to suffer death. He is a danger to the spiritual welfare of mankind, as the anarchist is to the physical."

" But " (I had always a ' but ' ready) " in the first place the *Turks* say the same thing, and their intolerance is set against that of the Christians. In the second place it is possible that even if the new doctrine is a danger to public morals at the present time, it may in the future prove to be a benefit.

" Giordano Bruno," said Pennacchi, " was burnt as a Pantheist, because he *would* not repent. Galileo abjured his teaching, which the Church justly condemned then, because it was not yet proved ; but it acknowledged its truth later when it had been proved. The Courts of the Inquisition were not infallible, but, as a matter of fact, their victims were not so numerous, in a period of eleven years in Spain they amounted to *only* 2,000." *Only* !

" I quite see that one must believe either that the persecuted, the crucified, those burnt at the stake, were martyrs for the truth, now as always, *or*, one must turn everything upside down, condemn humanism, become intolerant, bow the knee to the knights of the Crusades and Saint Louis, honour Torquemada and condemn all those one has loved before." (Sept. 3).

Again I am back in the wilderness of feelings and the tangled wood of arguments. Now, twenty years after, when I read again all the little black note-books that I filled during those two months with ponderings, contem-

plations and arrangements of Christianity for domestic use, I have the mournful impression of an everlasting to-and-fro, a ceaseless round in the treadmill of obsession.

" That is not the way to look for the truth," wrote Verkade in a letter, in which he answered the questions I had put to him. " For every difficulty that is solved for you, ten new ones will spring up, of which you will insist on having a solution. Make a generous sacrifice ! Say : ' My God, I believe in Thee, and I believe that Thy holy Church is the pillar and ground of truth and the way to redemption.' And you will find that you are not throwing yourself into the arms of a monster, but of a mother who will take you to her heart."

There were moments when this was clear to me. The diary says (Sept. 10) : " My mistake is that I have a great many philosophical and literary predilections which I will not give up. But the very thing required is ' to go and sell all things to buy the pearl of the kingdom of heaven.' And Jesus has promised that whoever gives up something in this world for the sake of following Him shall find it again in His kingdom."

I continued, then, going to Professor Pennacchi and asking him questions. From my notes I see that in order to explain the doctrine of indulgences to me he referred to the Epistle to the Romans, ix, 21 ; to prove the power of the Church to bind and loose, St. John xx, 23. " The symbolical interpretation of the Bible by the Church," I note, " is the *self*-interpretation of the Holy Spirit." " What I have to do is to live in good, for the good is God. The secret of faith is *to throw oneself into God*—to put communion with Him and His Church before the reason of this fallen world and the deceiving self-will of my own sinful nature. What I need is an act of violence to my conscience, a *coup d'état* by God ; Lord, let it be so !"

Weary of my numerous objections, Pennacchi some-

times said: "If only you could just once sit in the confessional and hear the confessions of the nuns at Sant' Andrea you would be convinced of where the truth is: the true Church alone creates such holy souls!" I could not sit in the confessional, of course, but one day Pennacchi took me to visit the good sisters. From the small, dark church you looked through an oblong grated window into the choir of the little convent, which was just then lit up by the golden light of the afternoon sun—the nuns were crowding towards the grating to see "*questo giovane per cui abbiamo pregato tanto*," and in confusion I gazed into a world of white coifs, pale faces, kind eyes and luminous smiles—a vision as of the light of heaven amongst angels and saints, while I had to stand outside in the gloom of Nature. . . But then, when Pennacchi told me afterwards, during my question hour, of how he had once received a visit from a soul in purgatory, and that it had been fiery red and loaded with red-hot chains, and that another time a soul from hell had come to him, with a face savage with despair—the massive stories destroyed my dawning sense of really being amongst the lost, of really being banished from the home of light, and my Protestant scepticism, my free-thinking criticism was re-awakened: the link was broken.

With Ballin and Padre Felice I still went every Saturday afternoon to La Rocca and stayed there till Sunday at noon. Saturday evening was spent in talks, first at the table, afterwards in Padre Felice's cell. Supplementing the supernatural experiences of Pennacchi, about which I told him, Padre Felice related one about a priest named Balliardi, who had awakened a harlot from the dead, and she had declared that she was in hell. Often the talk turned on Lutheranism and its founder, and my two Catholic friends would then express their regret that Luther had not been burnt in time. This gave new fuel to my feeling of scandal. I said nothing—but when I was

alone in my cell all the spirits of rebellion, all the genii of doubt returned.

These stories of the revelations of spirits—were they true? Were those who told them stupid and credulous—or untruthful, dishonest—"with a good intention?" Was I being deceived? Were they trying to make me believe something? Were these priests laughing behind my back—were they quietly enjoying themselves over Mogens, who took all these tales in good faith, and over myself, who was now also about to let myself be caught? At the supper table Padre Felice had told a story about a wine-glass, in which gold spots had appeared miraculously, because a priest, fleeing for his life and pursued by enemies, had hidden the consecrated Host in it. Did he believe such things himself? Sometimes, when he had been most serious and stiffly solemn, he would suddenly laugh derisively. He had told us of how he had once, as a young priest, saved a friend from living with a singer; he had gone to the town where his friend lived and looked him up, had talked to his heart, reminded him of his mother, had brought him away with him, away from the woman, had brought him home like the prodigal . . . "*Quelle scène poétique*!" he had then exclaimed—as if he were mocking the whole affair! And when Mogens declared at the supper table that it would have been better for humanity if Luther had died at the stake, Padre Felice argued, without knowing it, exactly like Caiaphas: "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not" (John, xi, 50). They both seemed to me to be so hard, so inhuman in their intolerance—more akin to those who stoned Stephen and persecuted Paul, than to the Apostles and martyrs. Was the Catholic Church perhaps simply a continuation of the synagogue on a Christian basis, and were the priests, with their "Touch not, taste not," their ordinances about fasting and abstinence from certain foods on certain days, the Pharisees of the new covenant?

Had Jesus not condemned beforehand the Catholic repetition of prayers?—" when you are praying speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard " (St. Matt. vi, 7). And the worship of Mary! How had Jesus not answered that woman of the people, who exclaimed in the Catholic way: " Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts that nourished thee"? " Nay," He said, " blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it!"

Yet I tried once more to formulate an independent Christian view. I laboured at it for some time, and finally put it in the following form—in a letter to Sophus Claussen, who had written from Rapallo and enquired about my spiritual welfare:

" If I am to find a symbol of the world, it will not be, as it was for Nietzsche, the eternal coming back of the ring, but it will be the *ellipse*. You know that the ellipse has two *foci*, and if a body is situated in the orbit of the ellipse, the central body which keeps it in the right track is in *one* of the foci of the ellipse. But in the other focus there is *nothing*.

" The spiritual world, then, is, in my opinion, to be likened to an ellipse. In one focus is God, in the other nothing, i.e. evil. It is God who maintains the world, but that does not prevent evil from also being a focus and pretending to be the driving force of the world. Now, I am of the opinion that he who only lives in beauty, lives in a world which is *above* the world of reality, but beneath the world of good. The world of good is like a circle about the focus God, while the beautiful is like a second ellipse inside the world ellipse—an ellipse which includes both good and evil, and from which one can pass over just as easily to the sphere of darkness about the focus nothingness, as to the kingdom of light about the focus God. In other words, it is an intermediate state, a kind of analogy to purgatory.

" You will not be able to deny that this conception is

clear. We æsthetes from 'beyond good and evil' are now faced with the choice into which of the two circles we will pass. Will we circle in the world of darkness about that which is nothing, or in the world of light about that which is life and being?"

My circles and ellipses, however, made not the slightest impression on my Rapalloese friend. Nor did these cabalistic signs for long provide me with the solution of the riddle of life, and I plunged into new ponderings; until I ended in being no longer able to put two ideas together and had to cease writing because my hand shook and my brain refused to work.

This happened one evening in La Rocca, in my cell with the brick floor, the whitewashed walls, the grated window looking out on the olive fields and the mountains. Harassed and tired, I began to walk to and fro, back and forth. Stopped, now at the prie-Dieu with the crucifix above it, contemplating in the feeble light from the three-branched oil lamp the wall decorations of the room—over my bed a colour-print of the "Immaculate Conception," Mary with her feet resting upon a half-moon and with the twelve stars about her head—on the mantel-shelf facing the bed a plaster bust of the Blessed Virgin and two cardboard angels in blue robes, with rose-pink wings, swinging censers. On the wall two oil-prints in garish colours— a Jesus and a Mary, both in star-spangled blue, and each with a flaming heart in the middle of the breast. This was modern Catholic art! At one time the Church had had a Giotto in her service—nowadays art had gone elsewhere, because life was elsewhere, and why was I seeking the living among the dead? I was reminded of Carlyle's words about the Catholic Church—"a galvanised corpse."

I stopped before the one grated window of the cell, looking towards the olive fields and the mountain. The stars were burning among the delicate foliage; large

and radiant, Jupiter rose above the mountain ridge. The grasshoppers played their *sistra* unwearyingly and monotonously, and far away in the night, a song floated up, the monotonous rising and falling phrase of a *Stornello* —a mournful sound, coming back again and again—a wild and plaintive calling, which made my heart swell with longing, not for God, not for the world, not for any earthly or heavenly joy, but for the deep grief that was the homeland of my poor heart. . .

## *LA ROCCA*

*Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi.*
*Psalm* 120.

*Two golden hands are folded, far away and still, and gleaming like an altar flame.*
*Le Livre de la Route.*

### I

In the middle of September Ballin and I pitched our tents in La Rocca. My artist friend began to work on a large fresco in the refectory—Saint Francis (according to a local legend) waiting at the table of the monks living in the convent in his time, and serving them with the food which he had prepared for them in the absence of the cook-friar. In order that I might also be of use I undertook the Latin inscriptions belonging to the fresco; I had a certain calligraphic ability, and now painted in beautiful red and green colours the most mediæval letters that anyone could desire. We both felt youthful and simple-minded in doing this work, like the disciples of the devout Masters of the Middle Ages, of those monks who had adorned missals with pictures on a golden ground, of those unknown painters whose altar pictures can now be seen in museums with *pictor ignotus* on the name plate, and who wielded their brush in the ages of faith, to the glory of God and the joy of Christian folk. During such hours my friend's thoughts and mine were in complete harmony, and we dreamed of returning to Denmark and establishing a studio for Christian art and Christian handicrafts, somewhat like that which William Morris had founded in England.

In other respects, too, we led a happy and peaceful life. As time went on I provided all the exits and entrances of the monastery with inscriptions, either as indicated by Padre Felice or chosen by myself. Thus in one place there was this one: "He drinketh of the brook by the wayside, therefore doth he lift up his head" (Psalm xv, v.7). Another place had: "I watched and became as a lonely sparrow on the roof, as a bittern in the desert." A third: "I lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Psalm cxx, v. 7). All of it in Latin; and that was another bond between Ballin and myself—our common love for the language of the Church. Even as a boy I had felt strangely drawn to Church Latin—far from seeming cold and foreign to me, it was dear and familiar like a mother tongue. In Pistoja I had one day bought—without knowing much about it, by the way—*The Little Hours of Our Lady*, in Latin, and I liked reading it. The appearance of Catholic prayer-books pleased me—I loved these gracefully printed little books with red type amongst the black and bound in such handsome bindings, violet with gilt edges, or black with red and with many green, blue and red ribbons for book-marks. Ballin, who had noticed this predilection of mine for prayer-books, wrote to Rome for a dainty little *Paroissien romain* of an almost diminutive size (in-48), and I prayed with zest from it. The whole of the liturgical, ceremonial and decorative side of Catholicism attracted me, and on Sundays I generally heard Mass kneeling in a dark corner of the small church of La Rocca, resting on one knee like the peasants about me (but with a handkerchief under my knee, because the brick floor stained my grey summer suit). I had quietly bought a rosary in Assisi; to the great glee of the tradesman from whom I bought it I had asked for a *rosario* (which means all the fifteen decades of the rosary) instead of a *corona*. I made the responses, *ora pro nobis*, when Padre Felice and Ballin said the Litany of the Blessed Virgin together, kneeling at the threshold

of the church door in the evening after a talk at the well; before long I knew the litany by heart. When Padre Felice, on our Lady's day in harvest time, led a procession to the chapel of the Madonna a little way from the convent to pray for rain, I joined in it, and when the rain really came the next morning no one was more convinced than I that a miracle had happened.

My two friends saw all this, and could not but believe that I was on the verge of becoming a Catholic. They did not know—and no one knew but my diary—that "then everything was overturned by a text in the New Testament like this: 'And he (Joseph) knew her not *till* she brought forth her firstborn son,' (St. Matth. i, 25), which Catholic exegetists commentate in vain by explaining that 'till' does not mean that Joseph *afterwards* knew his wife. Why, then, does the Gospel speak so indistinctly? Why does not Scripture say plainly, 'Mary was always a virgin'? Every doubt would then be excluded, and it would not be necessary to prove the Virgin Birth by the aid of very doubtful passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel" (Sept. 10).

It is true that after a collapse like this I built up again. "Is it not always so, that the books which deal with the most important things are the most difficult to understand?" I tried to persuade myself. But doubt continued to gnaw. "Has a wreath of legends formed about the life of Jesus, as about the lives of other great men? Has the Church enlarged it? Has Catholicism of the present day arisen in this manner?" Three terrible questions which paralysed my tongue when I wanted to repeat the words of the prayer: "Holy Mary, *Mother of God*—," or which at any rate made the prayer feeble and said with only half my will. And still I did not find the way to the one answer that closes the mouths of all the baying hounds which would swallow up the faith and peace and joy of the Christian. . . . "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

It was perceived that something was wrong with me,

that there was still a hindrance somewhere, and in order to break down this wall of separation I was taken to Montefalco, to the tomb of Santa Chiara. There, they thought, the miracle would happen, and the rain of grace pour down over my rationalist and dried-up soul.

In *Le Livre de la Route* I have only briefly mentioned Santa Chiara of Montefalco, one of the great religious figures of the thirteenth century, a contemporary of Angela of Foligno, Margherita of Cortona and Ubertino of Casale, born in 1268, died 1308. Although named after Chiara of Assisi, she was not a Franciscan, but followed the rule of Saint Augustine. Her life was spent in her native town of Montefalco, and her existence was devoted to prayer, works of penance and conflict with heresy—at that time the erroneous teaching of the Fraticelli, which was the same as that of the Quietists four hundred years, and of Nietzsche six hundred years later: to the superman everything is permitted, he is beyond good and evil. "The perfect man" (Fra Dolcino and his disciple and mistress Margherita taught) "has attained to such great freedom that he can do what seems good to him, and sin cannot hurt him." One of the apostles of the new teaching, Bentivenga of Gubbio, came to Montefalco and sought out the saint in order to win her over. "Tell me, Chiara, is it God who permits sin to come to pass?" the heretical preacher asked through the grille in the convent parlour. "God does not *will* sin, but He permits it to happen," was the answer. "*Bene*," continued Fra Bentivenga, "you are quite right. Nothing happens without God's permission—not a leaf stirs except He will it. But it follows then that fornication is no sin and without fear we can yield ourselves up to it, for what God wills and permits cannot be sinful." "From thy unclean heart such an unseemly example could be looked for, and I would fain not answer thee. God's share in the acts of mankind pertains only to that part of the act

which in itself is good and lawful, but not to the wrong and impure use thereof."

At this Thomistically correct answer the tempter retreated from the domain of philosophy, but tried in another way to sow doubt and unrest in Chiara's mind. Not being satisfied with the first interview, Bentivenga came back the next day and then the dispute lasted from early morning till noon. The heretic brought all the guns of his Bible texts into action, and Chiara answered: "I am a woman and not learned in the Scriptures as thou art. I know what I know from the Lord, who will not deceive me. In vain dost thou seek to drag the Scriptures and the Fathers over to thy side, but I tell thee that thou goest astray. Now I understand the vision I had before thy coming—I saw a man coming to me who was blind in both eyes, and I felt a loathing for him."—"Thou art an ignorant creature, that thou art!" declared the lay preacher." "I am not so ignorant that I do not perceive of what spirit thou art, thou poor, unhappy man, and that I must not weep when I see thee go to thy doom, and that all that thy Creator and Saviour has suffered for thee has been of no use!" Here Chiara burst into tears, and Bentivenga laughed scornfully and left the parlour. But a short while after he was seen in the convent church —not kneeling in prayer, but standing irresolutely, like a man considering a matter. Then he returned once more to Sister Chiara, shouted abusive and blasphemous words through the grille and walked away. But Chiara, who was abbess of the convent, said to her nuns, "My sisters, my sisters, do not believe either the Fraticelli or the Begardi or the Pinzoccheri or any other sect that comes in its own name. Call to mind that ye are children of the old and true Church, which is founded by God, redeemed and adorned with gifts of grace by Christ, inspired and governed by the Holy Spirit." Aided by the Inquisition, she saw to it that the lay preacher Bentivenga was put in a safe place where he could harm no one with his false teaching.

To the town of this zealous saint, then, we made a pilgrimage one day in September (it was the 13th). Pennacchi had arranged for "*una buona carrozza con due buoni cavalli*," and in this vehicle we rolled comfortably along the Umbrian plain. In the morning Mogens and I had heard the Roman priest's Mass in the little mystical, semi-dark church of Sant' Andrea and seen him give the nuns holy communion through a hatch near the altar. My theological barometer was set mainly at "Catholic"; after Mass I wrote down the following aphorism in my diary: "Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost, i.e. of love of God, charitas, which is the Holy Ghost." I had, moreover, made the following reflection on Luther: "Luther wanted his freedom, the autonomy of self, and looked for a theory which could justify his practice. His standpoint therefore became *the free faith*, that is, the individual as the highest authority instead of the Church of God, and from free faith followed free-thought."

Moutefalco is situated on the southern promontory of the low mountain ridge which separates the valley of the Topino from that of the Tiber, and divides the Umbrian plain in two. The road goes out over the plain to Santa Maria degli Angeli, to Rivotorto, Cannara and Bevagna. At the two last-mentioned little towns we got out of the carriage and saw the sights of the place, particularly the churches. Yet it was not so much the beautiful Romanesque architecture in these churches that interested the old professor, nor even in Bevagna, in the church of San Francesco, the stone on which Saint Francis is said to have stood when he preached to the birds in the field at Pian d'Arca. On the other hand, he was very eager to show me the body of a saint to be seen in one of the churches (I have not since been able to find it again), about which he asserted that it had been preserved from corruption by a miracle. The sacred body was kept in a glass coffin; we saw it as close as we could; I observed that the hands were perforated as though by

wood-worms, and declared to Ballin that the supposed corpse was carved out of wood and the whole thing a swindle! By force of his upbringing a Protestant has still this feeling—which was unknown to Ballin as a Jew—that anything Catholic is a lie and deceit. The Lutheran never treads securely on the Catholic church floor, he is always afraid of traps and pitfalls.

From Bevagna onwards I was therefore on the alert. And what Protestant suspicion could not accomplish alone, it was helped in by its hypocritical sister in Satan, the taking of offence. "Woe to that man by whom offences come," Jesus has said. But woe also to that man to whom offence comes, because it knows it will be heartily welcome—he is not among the best!

That honourable old man, Professor Pennacchi, has long since gone to his rest and rejoices before the face of God—I can no longer ask his pardon. But when I read now that page, those pages in the *Livre de la Route*, in which I did not leave him a shred of honour, "I blush for shame"—to quote myself from that time. He was told of it before his death, that I had treated his good name badly; it was told him by one of his students who had read the book in German. "*Ebbè, figliuolo mio, cosa mi fa, se questo signore a parlato male di me?*" No, what harm could it do him, that I had spoken in an ill-bred way about him?

But that foolish taking of offence did exceeding great harm to myself. Like the heretic Bentivenga in his time, I looked for support in the Scriptures. "Woe to them who walk in long robes and devour widows' houses," I had quoted to myself, in connection with Professor Pennacchi of Rome dining at the table of a family at Montefalco, who were perhaps in particularly easy circumstances. It was a direct transgression of one of God's most absolute commandments: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." I judged, and sentence was passed upon me. It condemned me to another year and a half of wandering

outside the true Church. "I saw," said Santa Chiara, "a man coming hither, who was blind in both eyes, and I felt a loathing for him."

## II

The morning after the return from Montefalco I thought I had escaped a great danger and felt as if I had been restored to human life. The diary says: "A bright and happy awakening to a cool, sunny morning. A feeling of deliverance, of a free, happy religion—a feeling of the great guiding power in the world, a filial confidence in the heavenly Father and a firm conviction that Christ is the Way—that self-control, goodness, charity, self-sacrifice for the great and beautiful are the necessary conditions for a life in peace and happiness and for everlasting life hereafter, in which we shall be judged by our life here." It sounds like a modernist sermon. It is horrible and shameful to think that one who had been so near the truth as I was could return with contentment to such phrases as these. How in the world did I really think I was going to attain to the virtues, of which I had hitherto not shown that I possessed much—self-control, goodness, charity—neither more nor less! And what prospect had a miserable sinner like myself, of twenty-seven years of age, of attaining to 'everlasting life in the hereafter' if a just God had willed to judge me on September 14th, 1894? To judge me, 'according to my life here,' as I had so complacently written—and I did not know that in the same hour the Catholic Church was singing the office of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in which she says in the second nocturn: "This sign (of the Cross) shall be seen in the heavens when the Lord cometh to judgment. Then shall all the secrets of the heart be revealed, and the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of glory and judge the world with fire. And all the secrets of the heart shall be revealed."

But the secret of so-called free-thought is that one does not think. *Lucus a non lucendo.* "You call yourself a free-thinker," Strindberg once wrote, "but what do you think with? With your blood and your senses, with your will and desire." Unfaith is the expression of a state of soul, not the result of a labour of thought.

At this time Padre Felice took a short holiday and stayed for a week with us at La Rocca. In the afternoon we went out for walks, generally along a little mountain path in the direction of San Gregorio. During these walks Padre Felice and Mogens said the office together—they walked in single file on the narrow path, each with his breviary, from which they said aloud the Latin psalms, hymns and prayers. When my mind was bent in that direction I also had a breviary and joined them in the prayers, stumbling like them over the stones in the path. The peasants, seeing this devout procession, stood aside with uncovered heads. Often we roamed further afield, one Sunday morning to Mora, where we stood among the men in the square before the church door and heard the singing of High Mass in the crowded church. Another time we went down to the valley of the Chiagio, to peasants whom Padre Felice knew. There we tasted the new must running in a sweet and muddy stream out of the pressing vats, where half-naked men were stamping about among the grapes.

For it was harvest time now—it was autumn. The mornings were brilliantly clear, Perugia and all the little towns were shining white; in the horizon, no longer hazy, Monte Amiata stood out clear and sharp. In La Rocca, too, there was a grape harvest; beneath the foliage, golden in the sun, between the grey or moss-green trunks of the elm-trees bearing the twisting vine-stems, the work was going on gaily. The whole population of La Rocca had turned out—the women stood under the trees, with kerchiefs tied about their golden faces—from the foliage overhead could be heard the sound of the breaking

of the grape-stalks, and of the talk and laughter of the men. " They are amusing themselves with equivocal jokes," said Padre Felice ; " all the time they are making allusions to the propagation of mankind !" The women blushed, laughed furtively, and from one of the large baskets full of purple and golden-green grapes they took the finest bunch and gave it to us strangers. All was life and gaiety, sunshine and greenness, grapes and Cupid—it was as though I felt beneath the structure of dogma of the Church Nature's foundation of heathenism, the simple enjoyment of life and the pious worship of creative forces. In vain did Ballin at my side talk to Padre Felice about " the confused minds of Danes who were incapable of following a line of reasoning and acting upon it." Like a true-born son of the barbarians, I walked on the Latin ground and " felt in such a Germanic Pantheistic state of mind. I dreamed of the restoration of ancient pagan piety—afterwards, too, when we were sitting at the dinner table which had been set in the cloister, and I looked out over the old, sun-faded roofs, out towards the mild, blue September sky with its small white clouds —giving thanks to Dionysos for the yellow wine and to Ceres for the good grapes and the golden, downy peaches on our table."

I fell ill, and had to stay in bed for a day or so. " Had my son's picture placed on the table beside me and lay looking at it a long while, and longing for him. Got up and sat in a wicker chair outside in the cloister—feeling of convalescence, decadence, weakness, bliss of dissolution. A state in which all thoughts, all speculations about Catholicism recede far away from me, and I only sit looking at the cloudy grey sky above the olive-grown mountains and feel like my old self. It is grey and quiet, a cock crows, as on a winter day in Denmark. And my thoughts travel northward in yearning towards the the mountains that look blue behind Perugia. I think of Svendborg, of my early summers, and I think of the

future, of what it will bring of illness and want—and I am home-sick for all of it" (Sept. 17).

"The empty system of formulæ of Catholicism," (the diary goes on) "shows its injurious effects in the intellectual and moral decay of the Latin countries. In the Protestant countries life is active and humanity is human. *Ex septentrione lux.*"

The Scandinavian in me awakens—with his strange duality: on the one hand morally scandalised at the "laxity of the South," on the other humanely indignant at "the severity of Catholicism." "No countries are more more immoral than the southern, with their belief in miracles," I assert (in spite of a lack of personal experience in this respect). But at the same time I am "sorry for my young friend, who sits in a corner and considers it his duty to forget the world."

Hand in hand with this re-awakening sense of belonging to the North, hand in hand with this Gothic renaissance went the taking of scandal, ever on the alert. "I cannot believe" (says the diary of Sept. 22) "that Pennacchi and Mogens Ballin are to be in heaven, Darwin and Taine in hell. *Tolstoiism* again appears to me the only possible modern Christianity—and besides, it is primitive Christianity. It will create a cosmos after the modern chaos—that and not the faith of the old churches, which is stained with the innocent blood of two worlds." Comparison is also brought into action. "Those poor people in La Rocca!" I exclaimed. "Instead of bread to satisfy their hunger, they receive advice to kiss the wonder-working feet of a stone image." For this the priests are to blame. "Out of the moral gospel of Christianity they contrive to make a teaching of magic and a new synagogue with new scribes and fasting Pharisees."

Away from the Church, then, out to the familiar *cliché* of "God's open sky!" "I am sitting on a boulder, with moss beneath my feet, on the edge of a brook running

deep down between the rocks. Around me there is a copse of oak and tamarinth, and cyclamens are in bloom down between the bushes. On the other side of the ravine white rocks are sunk between slopes of gravel where there are small shrubs. It is afternoon, and the sky is dull, looking like rain. The air is spicy and still, the flies are buzzing about me, a single *cicada* is playing its quivering silver string. High up, on invisible mountain plains, a shepherd boy is singing his remote, melancholy strophe. Oh, my Father, who art in secret—oh, my Mother, to whom all shall return !"

This is Pantheism breaking out again—with its one virtue, Stoic resignation. I dreamed of the possibility of a " Devotion to Life," a surrender to life, which defies all personal unhappiness, and which is the highest virtue, because it is necessary for the continuance and perfecting of life. I translated Christian ideas into terms of Pantheism : " To trust in God, to put one's faith in God, is that very rest in oneself of which Stuckenberg speaks—because our being, in so far as it gives us rest, is God expressed in us."

It is true that *my* being gave me *no* rest—for my being was unrest. I had completed my translation of Edgar Allan Poe, written my essay to *Tilskueren* about Bloy, and was no longer to be found in my cell working at decorative inscriptions. I joined Eugenio when he went up Monte Santa Lucia to shoot a little game for our supper —thrushes, fieldfares, now and then a quail—or I roamed about alone on the mountains, in the oak-woods or on the plain. I went to Sterpeto and Mora, to Valfabbrica, to Pianello and Petrignano, and returned late to La Rocca, refreshed by my wanderings, braced by the autumn air, by the fragrance of the harvest woods, by the wet solitude of the mountain ravines. And when supper was over—for Padre Felice and myself Eugenio had roasted a row of *tordi*, small birds, which were devoured in two delicious morsels ; for Mogens there were mush-

rooms, because he did not eat meat, or the small crabs which the boys caught in the brooks and came and sold to us—when supper was over I quickly said Good-night, left the two Catholics to burn Luther as much as they liked and to talk in elegant French about Sainte Thérèse, and went off to the village.

Now that the evenings were cooler, Padre Felice and Mogens did not go to the spring any more. Nor did the villagers frequent it much—instead they gathered now for an evening chat on the high stairs up to the houses or (when *that* grew too cold) in some big kitchen or other, where the first evening fire was glowing on the hearth. In this way it happened one evening that I was given a seat by the fire in the house of the Fiorettis, who lived near the gate leading to the spring, and kept *veglia* in company with the worthy couple, Mariano and Diamante, and their two children—the youth Angeluccio and his sister, who was a little older. " Her name is Rosina," I wrote in the evening in my diary, " and they say about her that she is an illegitimate member of the noblest house in Umbria—the Counts Fiumi. She is tall and slender, delicate and dainty, with small hands and feet. Throat and chin feline ; the mouth small, with narrow lips ; the nose delicate and curved ; the eyes green beneath heavy, dark lashes. Her voice is hoarse when she speaks, but ringingly clear when she sings." Soon other young people joined the circle when it was rumoured that there was a vigil at the Fiorettis'—no refreshments of any kind were offered, but they talked, told stories, laughed and sang. At the Fiorettis', sitting between Angeluccio and Rosina, I heard for the first time the Italian *stornello*.

The *stornello* and its Tuscan relative, the *rispetto* are so inseparably bound up with Italian speech, that it is impossible to translate them. As impossible as it would be to translate Danish folk-songs. Even if I translate literally the text of a stornello, such as, for instance, " Flower, little flower ! To thee, thou fair one, I am bound by

love and would give up life itself for a kiss," I have not reproduced the music and the singing of these three lines :

*Fiorin, fiorino*
*Di voi, bellina, innamorato sono,*
*La vita vi darei per un bacino.*

Or can the translated sentence : " Dear one, I shall never love thee more," convey the mournfulness and the hopeless plaint in a line like this :

*Non si fa più l'amor con te, carina* !

The themes of the *stornello* are always life and flowers —the light and joy of the heart, its woe and plaint, the pain of longing and the glow of passion, the sadness of memories and the sorrow of parting.

" And when you came to me at eventide the best chair was kept for you—I have given it away now because you do not come any more."

" I journeyed to Rome to pray in Saint Peter's, but when I came into the colonnade, a thought of you came to me and I turned back."

" And when you pass our house at night, then sing, and I, who am in bed, shall hear you and turn my back on mother, and weep, weep !"

" Thou apple-blossom, when will that moment come, that hour, when thou and I shall put out the candle together ?"

" I want a husband and it is thou I want. What do the weal and woe of the future concern me. I am thinking of *now*, I am not thinking of *later* !"

" Oh, Lord, let Matteo's wife die. Matteo is beautiful and I wish to marry him !"

" Ah, God, best of all I would wish to open my veins and give you my red blood to drink, then would I know that we could never be parted."

This was Italy outside the Church—these were the young girls when they were not saying their rosary—

these were the young men when they were not kneeling at Padre Felice's altar. The large kitchen of the Fiorettis' was full of young people and of their singing, and every time the singing threatened to stop I asked for more, and they sang to the honour and joy of Signor Giovanni. Laurina, *la maestra*, sang—she had book-learning and ran home to fetch a small book with one hundred and fifty *Stornelli d'amore*. Melinda sang, *il Piovano's* daughter, who otherwise did not condescend to associate with the humbler village folk. *La bella Dendina* sang, the handsome young widow, with whom Eugenio was rather smitten. And Rosina sang, with so much fervour, that at last it made her cough, and the others warned her teasingly with a jesting stornello: "*Pampani ed uva*!" "There was one thing my mother always said: 'My daughter, the love of the stranger does not last!' '*Questo e per voi, Signor Giovanni*!' said Angeluccio, and laughed—'that was meant for you!' But Rosina blushed, said 'Spropositi!' looked angrily at her brother—and we broke up.

When I got back to the convent Padre Felice and Ballin had gone to bed. I sat down on the low wall in the cloister, with my back against one of the pillars and looked up at the stars—the despised stars! Charles's Wain stood just over the church roof—I looked at it and at Arcturus shining a long way down in the horizon. And with a strange fascination, with all the power of melancholy, the lines of the stornello kept singing in my soul in the voice of Rosina: "*Non si fa più l'amor con te, carina*!"

## III

If this were a novel, the reader would now be entitled to expect a story about guilty passion. A little love idyll of the season of the wine harvest, with a title like the refrain of the stornello "*Pampani ed uva*," "Tendrils and

grapes," and as a motto: "*L'amor del forestiero poco dura*," "The love of the stranger does not last long."

But amorous adventures between beautiful Italian girls and Scandinavian strangers occur more frequently in books than in real life. If for no other reason, then because Italian family morals are not to be played with, and the venturesome northerner who is too familiar with a young peasant girl in Italy easily runs a risk of serious altercations with her male relatives. And to this day I am on the very best terms both with old Mariano Fioretti and with Angeluccio, whom I went to see a couple of weeks ago, and who lives with his wife and their six children in a small stone house up on the desolate mountain above La Rocca. "Down in the town the children learn so much that is bad," Angeluccio explained to me, as if La Rocca were a Babel of corruption. Rosina, he told me, was married and lived in Tordibetto; she had no children, but had grown as thin as a lath and had lost all her teeth. "She is not beautiful any longer, Signor Giovanni!" says Angeluccio, and slaps me on the shoulder. He is quite aware that I thought his sister beautiful—and I was not alone in this, by the way.

So there is no love story about Rosina and Signor Giovanni. One greater than she, mightier and fairer than the little Umbrian peasant girl who had revealed herself to me that evening and for whose sake I continued to visit the Fiorettis' house, to sit by the evening fire, or sometimes to join the company of the young girls when they went to the woods to gather mushrooms or strip leaves from the trees for fodder. This was my old mistress, Nature, and with her I liked best to be alone.

"I am sitting up on the mountain" (says the diary) "in the dried bed of a brook of flat sandstones. Along both banks there is gravel grown with rest-harrow, wormwood, juniper and small oaks. About me there is cool shade from the large oaks behind me and the morning clouds in the blue sky. I sit looking at the

spiders and the big black ants running along over the stone slabs on incomprehensible errands. Now and then a cicada shakes its metallic sistrum, and below me, on the paths and fields, there are people talking and people shouting; women are washing at the spring, men are ploughing in the fields. In the clear forenoon sun the yellow soil is bright between the endless rows of olive trees away over the hills, and far out beyond the plain the mountains rise, where stands luminous Perugia. I look at the wide country, I look at little grey La Rocca at my feet, with its decayed walls and the rounded remains of its bastions, and its faded, withered roofs. I hear the oaks whispering behind me, and a donkey braying, groaning passionately, and a cock crowing somewhere a long way off. The man at the plough shouts to his white, slowly walking oxen, and the women at the washing-place chatter and laugh, and the white linen gleams along the hedges beside them. And, in spite of everything, I am in a mood of great content; my feeling of life is so deep and full, so intoxicating and infinite" (Sept. 24).

As in the old days, I was again a wanderer in Nature, a lover of Nature, observing and describing her. It was in La Rocca, on the mountains between Mora and Valfabbrica and on the plain between San Gregorio and Ripa, that I gained a knowledge of the real nature of Italy and was cured of the traditional idea about "skies that are always blue." Instead of the myrtles and laurels of Mignon I found an almost northern oak-wood; instead of cypresses the tall, green poplars along the course of the Chiagio. Autumn brought heavy falls of rain, mighty thunder-storms, cloudbursts which transformed the mountain paths into torrents of yellow, roaring water. When the storm had passed I hurried out—out to see, to take it all in, to describe it. From the diary I insert a couple of landscape sketches of that time:

"View from La Rocca, four o'clock in the afternoon,

after a thunderstorm. The clouds are rising and sweep past the window like thin smoke, drifting away over the trees on the mountains like greyish fog. From the broad country, where all the roads are flashing in the sun like silver, white columns of cloud and great shining globes of steam detach themselves, ascending like balloons in front of the grey-blue sky of clouds on the horizon. Round about, between the mountains, they are like steaming craters. The air is raw, cold, strong—there is a rushing sound of rain-filled brooks " (Sept. 26).

" An oak-wood after rain. Falling of drops over a ground of fine, green tamarinths and withered russet bracken. Large, wet pieces of rock take a bluish tinge in the light from a cloudless and blue sky. Mountain streams are rushing in the depths ; ' deep is calling unto deep.' On the further side of the ravine gleaming white trunks of birch trees like scattered stitches of silver in the reddish carpet of autumn woods on the mountain side and the rain-wet blue of the large surfaces of stone. Further back in the valley, on the golden-brown stubble-fields, there is a grey farm. I hear children calling from it and cocks crowing. Lambs are bleating on the hillside. Where the valley opens out towards a large and hilly mountain country, covered with the worn golden-brown plush of the harvest, a rainbow spans the sky in front of the distant, steam-veiled summits. In a sudden flash of sunlight, remote mountain-tops break out in the showery horizon ; they gleam silver bright, with splashes of copper red where there are woods, and with silvery white grooves of mountain paths and streams.

" A shower comes. It is on a steep, stone-strewn path along a mountain slope. Shelter under a plane tree, the wet, withering foliage of which crackles in the rainy wind. Go on, between large boulders, where the water oozes and drips from the thick moss. Still oak-woods, open, wet and autumnal. All the undergrowth is full of red and yellow and blue berries. And while I sit on the roots of

an oak, with my dirty boots in wet leaves and wet soil, and hear the water trickling and the wind whistling, and look at a slope where red bracken and wet grass are in the shade, while the tops of the gnarled oaks reach up into the sunshine, up to white clouds and blue sky, all strange thoughts disappear from my mind, and only my old, sheer joy in Nature is left" (Oct. 1).

"Another wandering on the mountains. By the road to San Gregorio, then along a gravelly lane beside a hillside, where there is a spicy scent from an oak-wood and a murmuring of the trees over a ground of tamarinth, and many cyclamens in bloom. The stillness in this heavily scented wood is almost suffocating—a heavy, mouldy, disquieting hot-house atmosphere. The only sound is the faint purling of a spring in the depth of a valley, and up in the heights a soft murmur from the woods.

"The road leads upwards, over a vast, uninhabited mountain with stony paths, scattered trees, here and there a flock of sheep grazing.

"View from the mountain. The cloudy sky hangs wide and heavy and still over the country. It is so still that when a dog barks up here on the mountain there is an echo from the other side of Umbria. I hear children shouting somewhere in a valley, and singing in the plain below. And over on the dark blue mountains on the other side, along the foot of which a whitish mist rises up from the moist lands, I see the trailing smoke from a hidden village.

"Towards evening. It is clearing. Above Perugia the sky opens out in radiant gold, with rows of distant luminous clouds like angelic hosts. From an opening in a cloud-kite issues a glowing light that veils the distant mountains in a haze of purplish violet. Finally blue clouds in a crimson evening sky. The olive fields are blackish brown, the olive foliage hangs like a veil of silver over the ground or is outlined sharply against the

gold of the sunset and the violet atmosphere. The valley of La Rocca lies before me, grey in the fading daylight, and above Sterpeto stands the golden half-moon. As I walk up the path to the monastery I am met by all the church-goers coming out from Benediction—at their head Rosina, in a bright red *fazzoletto*, green bodice and blue skirt, and radiant with youth. "*Eccolo* !' the boys shout gaily—' There he is !' I answer gaily : ' Eccoli !' and try Santino's gun of elder wood " (Oct. 2).

This life might be very pleasant for me, but it did not fulfil the expectations with which I had come. I felt that I would soon have to leave La Rocca, leave Assisi, leave Italy. The money I had earned by translating Poe allowed me a short stay in Florence—then home. Home without having seen Rome, Siena, Pisa, so many other wonders. Home, without having achieved the object for which I had set out—that of becoming a Christian. " *Signor Francesco e un santo*," it was said at the Fiorettis' one evening (I shared their simple meal with them, ate *torta* and *erbaccio* and drank water with them) —" Signor Francesco is a saint, Signor Giovanni is not ! " They had nothing against my not being a saint—each one to his trade ! They merely stated the fact.

And they were right. I felt it myself, that Ballin was better, purer, stronger than I—that for him it was natural to confess to the religion of the cross. While *my* religion, when I allowed my nature to rule, never became anything but Pantheistic mysticism, the Dionysian joy over the fulness of life—" that love of life, of the infinity of existence and eternity which fills my heart with the same infinite rapture here on the banks of the Chiagio as so many a time before under Danish skies."

Infinite rapture is a large term. But there *was* an evening in that Umbrian autumn when Pan and Dionysos and all the gods of old really filled my soul, so that it swelled and came near to bursting with joy. I had walked from La Rocca to Assisi shortly after the midday

meal to arrange a few matters, make one or two purchases, fetch a book for Mogens at Filomena's. It was late before I had finished my errands, so that I decided to have supper before leaving the town. I did not have it at Filomena's, but in a *trattori* near the Porta San Francesco—a not very select company was gathered about the long deal tables, extremely unshaven gentlemen and very gay, voluminous young women in white blouses. But the food was irreproachable. The wine was good, I drank a deal of it.

Then I passed out at the gate, down the steep road to Ponte San Vittorino and out along the road to Petrignano. Over behind Perugia the sun was setting in flaming red, along the roadside the oaks, semi-leafless, stood in clear, black silhouettes against a sunset sky, which from flaming gold rose to the purest pale-green glass. I walked and walked as though borne up on wings, as though led by hands, as though drawn on by the beauty opening its gates before me. The evening glow faded and the night came ; Arcturus was lit and all my other stars, and out across the dark vine-grown fields I could hear a stornello far away—one of those I knew and loved—" *Non si fa più l'amor con te, carina* ! " It was an ecstasy of the beauty of Nature, of youth, of swelling mournfulness and longing for love, and all of it flowed into a feeling so strong and deep that I could find no other expression for it than to fold my hands. With folded hands I came walking into Palazzo, the village which is half-way between Assisi and La Rocca, and there Mogens came towards me, riding on a mule and leading a donkey, on whose back the prodigal was brought home to the monastery.

## IV

" I promise to pray a great deal for that poor Jörgensen. Tell him that I am very sorry for him." It was

Verkade who wrote like this to Mogens from his monastery at Beuron, and Mogens brought the message to me. "*Je prierai bien pour ce pauvre Joergensen, dites-lui que je le trouve très pauvre* ! "

Ballin and I had come in to Assisi from La Rocca to attend the feast of Saint Francis on the 3rd and 4th of October. We were again in Filomena's house together ; but how changed everything was from when I entered it two months ago ! Then I said about my earlier friends that " they set out to make other people as unhappy as they were themselves." And now I was on my way back to them, and Verkade called me *ce pauvre Joergensen. Pauvre*—which means both poor as to worldly goods and to be pitied in another sense. With some irritation I asked Ballin, " What does he mean by calling me poor ? Is *he* rich, perhaps ? " " Yes," answered Ballin, looking gravely at me ; " he is rich and you are poor ! " " And he prides himself on that ? " I retorted, adding (learned in the Scriptures as I was) : " Well, let him say the prayer of the Pharisee if he likes—' Lord, I thank thee that I am not as this publican, this sinner, this *pauvre Joergensen* ! ' " " Verkade does not pride himself on it," Mogens answered gently ; " he only thinks it is very sad that you might be as rich as he and that you will not."

No, I *would* not—and I knew it. " Every thought of order, of unyielding authority, of strict obedience, makes me rebel—as when, for instance, Padre Felice talks about the absolute authority of parents in old Catholic families, or about how the novice master in the convent " breaks " the will of the novices, " mortifies " their nature by refusing to allow them to see their parents when the latter come to visit them. I would not have law but life—and yet the brutal fulness of life troubles me. . . ." (Sept. 24.)

It was at this time that I wrote a poem about the pagan morning and the Christian evening ; about the two souls continually at war within me, the two wills : the will

towards God and the will towards the world ; the two voices—" There are two voices in constant strife. There are two lights, both wanting to burn. There are desires yearning for life, and longing to suffer with God who suffers. At the foot of the Cross a soul is kneeling, Redemption it seeks as it seeks for peace, Imploring it in humble and contrite prayer. And there is one whose desires come into bloom beyond the hills, and who believes in life's fulness and in the return of joy."

Beyond the mountains in the horizon—beyond all the blue mountains—there the flower of my longing and the happiness of home still grew—every day that passed everything about me grew more Scandinavian. The red and blue asters would be in bloom now in Denmark, the Virginia creeper hanging crimson from the balconies of the villas ; in the gardens of the Agricultural College the yellow helianthus would be shining, and the chestnut trees would be arching their gold flaming, golden yellow, pallid golden domes above the canals in Frederiksberg Park. There, in the north, was Stuckenberg—I longed to look again into his dark blue eyes and to hear his frail voice saying, " Johs ! " There was my wife, there was my little three-year old son, who fell asleep every night with my photograph in his chubby little arms and asked all day long whether I was not coming home soon. And now he had recently been ill, had had fever, called for me and cried because I was not there. What was I doing here in Italy, kneeling before strange gods ?

And yet, in spite of all this, one evening when I met Rosina I asked her to pray for me. It was down by the spring ; she was eating a pomegranate—the fruit to which Solomon in the Canticle compares the cheeks of his beloved—and she gave me one of the golden fruits with the rosy flesh. I asked her to pray " for my intentions," as Catholics express it, and my intentions, recorded in the diary, were, " my wife, my son, my pecuniary affairs, the forgiveness of my sins."

Rosina promised me an hour's prayer in the morning and half an hour every evening. Every morning I now saw her faithfully kneeling for a whole hour in the church, in the evening she prayed for me during the saying of the rosary, which was led by our learned friend, Laurina, the schoolmaster's wife.

For this was October, the month of the rosary. From the first day when I had shyly bought a *corona* in Assisi I had had a strange predilection for these prayer beads, which were worn bright by the fingers gliding over them, as the soul is worn clean and pure by the constantly running stream of prayer. During the remaining weeks of October I became a faithful guest at the evening devotions in the church at La Rocca, and from my lips sounded, softly but honestly, the words uttered by the supra-real voice of an archangel to the blessed among women: "Hail, Mary . . . ."

Now I was on the right road—I had put myself into the hands of the great mediatrix—of her whom Bernard of Clairvaux called "*omnipotentia supplex*," "supplicating omnipotence."

From that time onwards I was under the sure guidance of grace. After the devotions of the rosary I acquired another of the modern devotions of the Catholic Church —the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Through Padre Felice I became acquainted with the English periodical, *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. It was written in modern English; it was in the language of Byron and Shelley! For the first time I saw the tongue of the great revolutionaries employed to the glory of the Catholic Church, and England—after four hundred years of "*No Popery!*"—bending the knee to Rome. And there I found the words, which were to make a deeper impression on me in English than in any other language, and which became decisive for me: "*In the building up of the spiritual edifice to the honour and glory of God, my soul must meekly rest in everything on God* WITH

AN UTTER DISTRUST OF ITSELF *and unbounded confidence in Him.*"[1]

These words, written in Wimbledon by an unknown English priest, struck home in me. *Utter distrust of myself.* It was my very confidence in myself that had constantly led me astray, and my thinking that with my small powers of reason I should be able to empty the ocean of eternity! I had wanted to build outside the good foundation of humility.

"But humility has three degrees—the first is love of Nature, the deep joy over the greatness of God, the awe of existence. The second is the love for a woman, the conquered surrender to life, with which (as Claussen has said) one 'gets rid of one's sneaking after solitude.' From this arises the love for the child, the love of kindred, the love of home, the love of country (for which reason the arrogant always detest 'the bother of children' and 'that nonsense about loving one's country'). The third degree is the complete distrust of self, of one's own will, feelings and ability. For only thus can Christ be acquired as authority—Christ who is one with the Church of Christ." (Oct. 12.)

I began to feel the sweetness of surrender. It was a comfort after all the wrangling and worrying with many ideas—to give my thoughts only to the one thing needful. Padre Felice lent me Riva's *Filotea*, a widely-read handbook in Italy, detailed but popular; it was in this humble form that I was to gain my knowledge of Catholic dogma. Without criticism, in a spirit of receptiveness, I read the simple explanations in this book of the doctrines of the Church and did not try to give them other explanations nor doubt them. I opened the long forgotten Thomas à Kempis and applied to myself

[1]Messengers of The Sacred Heart, 1894, p. 106. Italics mine in the diary.

words like these: "Learn, O dust, to obey; earth and clay that thou art, learn to break thy own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection" (iii, 13).

"That which is keeping me back from becoming a Catholic," I reflected, "is the love of myself, of my past, of my being, of my earlier convictions, which, in spite of all my experience, I consider favourable to the good fortune and happiness of mankind in general, of myself in particular. It is the delusion of egoism with which I deceive myself.

"But is it not written: 'Seek first the kingdom of God' (i.e. the Church), 'and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.' '*All these things*'—all that I now seem to give up—habits of mind, well-worn modes of thought, familiar ideas—all that which after all is not of any real use to me any longer, and to which I only cling out of obstinacy and sloth—and which will be restored to me for real use, if I give it up now. For that which I can win by that sacrifice of myself, of my inmost self, is Thee, O Lord, the life in Thee, the peace of heaven and eternal blessedness. I know it Lord—and yet I hesitate—*Usquequo, Domine?*"

This was written down on the Vigil of the Commemoration of the Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Later on the same evening or night:

"Ah, God, is it *this:* to offer to Thee all my thoughts, all my opinions and feelings and instead to believe in Thee, that Thy kingdom can come in me, in my purified, selfless heart? Ah, God, is it so? Have I at last found Thee? At last understood what it is Thou dost demand, when Thou commandest us to *leave all things?* Ah, God, is it true? Dare I believe it?" (Oct. 13.)

In order to say Mass on the above-mentioned feast, Padre Felice came to La Rocca. In contrast to his usual state he was tired and worn out—he had watched three days and nights by the bedside of a man who was suffer-

ing from cancer, whom no one would undertake to nurse, and who lived alone in a poverty-stricken little house near the Chiagio. " At the end I heard his confession, and it was difficult because his lips were eaten away by the disease. I had to get right up on the bed beside him to understand what he was saying." " Were you not afraid of being infected ? " asked Mogens. " Not while I was there," answered our Dutch friend. " I was there in the name of holy obedience ; my superiors had sent me there and ordered me to stay till the end. But when it was all over—when my sick man had passed away and I came out from the close room into the fresh air, I was seized with panic. I was quite sure I had caught the infection—and I started to run as fast as I could—as if I could run away from death ! It was grace that was not acting any longer—only Nature was left ! Isn't it so, Signor Giovanni ? " said Padre Felice, turning to me. " Without the grace of God man is but a poor animal, now timid as a hare, now a cruel beast of prey ; always with much malice and little goodness, that quickly gives way."

The two powers—*Angelus Domini* and *Advocatus Diaboli*—were still for a long time to carry on their conflict within me—" that which looks like death and is life, and that which looks like life and is death "—but the issue of the conflict was a foregone conclusion. It was not in the little church of La Rocca, at the feet of Padre Felice, that I was to make my first confession—but I was beginning gradually to prepare myself for it. I was longing, not only to think as a Catholic, but to be one. " My ideas have absorbed me so much that I almost forget that I am not a Christian yet. I know that self-denial is necessary for communion with God—but the way to it goes through God's Church. My self-denial on my own account can only be a preparation. I have not confessed my sins to God—I have not received the assurance of His forgiveness—I have no power to

live a life of self-denial, for this power is only given through the sacraments. Therefore. . . ." (Oct. 15.)

The last days at La Rocca were spent in quiet peace. "You do not come down to us any more to keep *Veglia?*" said Rosina, one evening after the rosary devotions. No, I did not go there any more, and when I did once or twice more seek the old road up in the mountains, devoutness came with me to the woods, and I prayed at the small, lonely chapels to be found up there in the wilderness, kneeling on the stone bench outside the low, grated window. It was at this time that Ballin and I, both seized with the spirit of roaming, one day set out over the plain and visited the small towns of Ripa and Civitella. I have written about them in the last part of my book, *Parables*.

Padre Felice came out to us as usual on Saturday and drove back to Assisi on Sunday morning. Saturday evening was still the time for talk. Sometimes our priest friend told us amusing little incidents from the lesson in catechism for the children of the village. There was, for instance, my little friend Santino, who declared that after death good people went to heaven "there to enjoy the contemplation of God *for three years*!" "For three years"—in Italian, "*per tre anni*"—was the childish interpretation of the *eternamente* of the catechism, "everlastingly." With another Padre Felice had had the following conversation with regard to the commandment about the observance of the holy day:

"Were you at church on Sunday?"

"No, Father."

"Why not?"

"Because I was on the way there, but then I went into a house."

"Why did you go into that house?"

"Because they called me."

"Was not somebody else calling you?"

"No, Father."

"Was God not calling you?"

"No, Father!"

"But you know, don't you, that the priest speaks in God's stead?"

"Yes, Father."

"Did not the priest call you, then?"

"No, Father."

"Did you not hear the bells ring?"

"Yes, Father."

"But who rings the bells?"

"The priest does."

"But why does he ring them?"

"Because he wants to."

"But why does he want to?"

"*Eh, chi lo sà!*"

And with this favourite expression of Italians and its accompanying shrug of the shoulders ended our Dutch friend's attempt to lead his pupil by a Socratic path to understand the connection between God—priest—bell-ringing.

. . . . .

The day of departure drew near. Then came the farewells.

The farewell to Padre Felice, who overwhelmed me with gifts—medals, holy pictures, small envelopes with soil from the grave of Saint Francis. With emotion he kissed me on both cheeks and gave me this advice: "Go on with your studies and your observations and pray a great deal to Our Blessed Lady."

The farewell to good old, wrinkled Filomena Sensi, who shed a tear and said: "*Ebbé, Signor Giovanni mio!* May Madonna and San Francesco go with you!"

The farewell to Assisi—with its grey roofs and its slender campanile, with its narrow, crooked streets in stairs and its purling wells, the farewell to the saints' tombs of San Francesco and Santa Chiara, where the lamps burn without ceasing in the gloom of the crypt,

to the frescoes of Giotto and the angels of Cimabue in the upper church, the gentle saint of Simone Martini in the lower one and the fresco-covered vaults which are clothed as though with costly tapestry. The farewell to the sombre church of San Damiano and the bright chapel with the frescoes of Tiberio d'Assisi in the outer court, the farewell to the groves of the Pincio, where I had sat so often and read, thought and written ; to the nuns in Sant' Andrea, to the convent church of Santa Croce (the church in which I had heard Mass on that radiant morning of the 29th of August). The farewell to the small churchyard of San Francesco, where Mogens and I had worked together, and to Fonte Olivieri, whose murmuring waters I was no longer to hear beneath my window.

But the bitterest farewell was the farewell to La Rocca.

On the last evening I went down to the village, to the Fiorettis'. Once more we sat together in the large kitchen, and the firelight played in bright flames on Angeluccio, who was having his supper at the long table, and on the rest of us who were chatting in a circle round the hearth. We talked of my journey, of how long it would take, what countries I was to pass through, and of how long I was to be away from them all. Would I ever come back again ? There were long pauses, during which we all sighed. When I left they gave me apples and grapes—the last of the year—and Rosina held a candle to lead me out. As we stood on the stone steps outside the house I pressed her hand and thanked her, and I have never seen her since.

Later in the evening Ballin and I went down to the spring and sat there as we had done at the beginning. The night was clear and starlit. We looked up at the sky and did not dispute on the subject of the twinkling of the stars. We felt nearer to each other than ever before, and talked for a long while about the great fundamental theme of losing one's life in order to save it. " It is on

a foundation of the supernatural alone that we can live naturally," said Mogens. " All that we give up for God's sake we shall receive back a hundredfold."

Then, in the stillness of the night we heard a sound far away—music—a violin. We listened; the sound drew nearer and still nearer. It was someone playing as he walked, like a wandering minstrel of old, like a *joculator Domini*, like Saint Francis himself. We sat motionless, overwhelmed, not daring to stir—was it a dream or reality, was it a revelation—as when the angel in Rieti played outside the window of Saint Francis in the house of Thedaldo the Saracen?

Nearer and nearer came the sound of the violin—now a figure appeared down at the turn of the road leading up to the spring from Bichiabugo's house—it was Piombino, the fiddler of La Rocca, returning home from a harvest feast! With his face turned to the stars, now and then stumbling over the stones in the path, he played as if in an ecstasy—when he was quite near us we called to him—he started, but immediately said, with relief: " Oh, it's you! " And still playing he went on before us, in through the lower gate of the town, into black, sleeping La Rocca, where the only light came from the stars. We followed him—on the lowest step of the stairs to La Dendina's house he sat down and went on playing with a passion of anguish that gripped one's heart, between the dark houses underneath the stars. Round about us the people of La Rocca awoke; window after window was opened, and when Piombino stopped voices came from all directions: " *Come suoni bene, Piombino! Fa tanto piacere di sentire il violino la notte!* " " How well you play, Piombino! And how beautiful the violin sounds at night! "

And while Piombino was again beginning to play there was a voice that said: " You thought you were giving up poetry, Giovanni! Behold, she is coming towards you and she is fairer than ever before! "

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